JORDAN

UMAYYAD ROUTE

JORDAN

UMAYYAD ROUTE

Umayyad Route
Project funded by the EUROPEAN UNION
ENPI CBCMED
CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
Cultural Technologies for Heritage and Conservation
تقنيات التراث

Jordan. Umayyad Route

1st Edition, 2016

Edition
Andalusian Public Foundation El legado andalusí

Texts
Talal Akasheh, Naif Haddad, Leen Fakhoury, Fardous Ajlouni,
Mohammad Debajah, Jordan Tourism Board

Photographs
Jordan Tourism Board - Fundación Pública Andaluza El legado andalusí -
Daniele Grammatico - FOTOGRAFIAJO Inc. - Mohammad Anabtawi - Hadeel Alramahi -Shutterstock
Food Photographs are curtsy of Kababji Restaurant (Amman)

Graphic Design, layout and maps
José Manuel Vargas Diosayuda. Diseño Editorial

Free distribution

ISBN
978-84-96395-81-7

Legal Deposit Number
Gr- 1513 - 2016

The Umayyad Route is a project funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and led by the Andalusian Public Foundation El legado andalusí. It gathers a network of partners in seven countries in the Mediterranean region: Spain, Portugal, Italy, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan.
This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union under the ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the beneficiary (Fundación Pública Andaluza El legado andalusí) and their Jordanian partners [Cultural Technologies for Heritage and Conservation (CULTECH)] and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union or of the Programme's management structures.
The 2007-2013 ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme is a multilateral Cross-Border Cooperation initiative funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The Programme objective is to promote the sustainable and harmonious cooperation process at the Mediterranean Basin level by dealing with the common challenges and enhancing its endogenous potential. It finances cooperation projects as a contribution to the economic, social, environmental and cultural development of the Mediterranean region. The following 14 countries participate in the Programme: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Palestine, Portugal, Spain, Syria (participation currently suspended), Tunisia. The Joint Managing Authority (JMA) is the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (Italy). The official Programme languages are Arabic, English and French (www.enpicbcmed.eu).

Index

Introduction

Itineraries



Umayyad Project (ENPI)

The Umayyad Route seeks to publicize the profound human, cultural, artistic and scientific relationship between East and West and the way in which the Greco-Roman legacy was passed on to Europe through al-Andalus. This route was the path along which the Arabs came to the Iberian Peninsular and Europe, but it was also a channel for the transfer of knowledge and perfectly illustrates the close collaboration between the two Cultures. Of these multiple contacts the most important things to have survived the wear and tear of history are a common cultural and artistic background, a shared history and heritage. This is the raison d'être of these routes, which seek to forge links and strengthen the relations between the different peoples they encompass, united by a common past.

The Umayyad Route retraces part of the journey followed by the dynasty founded by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufian from its capital in Damascus and its subsequent expansion along the southern shores of the Mediterranean to the Iberian Peninsula. The route begins therefore in the Near East before heading off along the Mediterranean across North Africa. It follows the path by which Arabic civilization came to Europe and which gave rise to the Caliphate of Cordoba, where the Hispano-Muslim civilization flourished for several centuries. The itinerary starts at its easternmost point in Jordan and Lebanon, passing through Egypt and Tunisia, with a stopover in Sicily, and ends up in the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal).

Jordan and the Umayyads

Situated between the Arabian Peninsula, Mesopotamia, the Eastern Mediterranean and Egypt, what is now the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has throughout history been a melting pot inhabited by countless civilizations. Cities, towns and fortresses are concentrated in the west of the country along a historic road known as the King's Highway, which runs from the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea in the South to the Syrian frontier in the North. Most of Jordan is covered by deserts and vast steppe-like horizons, although the *jebels*, the mountains and high plains situated to the east of the River Jordan and the Dead Sea, receive enough rain to house beautiful landscapes, in which conifer forests alternate with olive groves and green valleys, while old towns and villages are surrounded by vegetable gardens. These limestone hills surround the Dead Sea Depression, which sinks 400 m below sea level.



Stage of the South Theater in the ancient Roman city of Jerash (Gerasa)



Desert of Wadi Rum

The area spanned today by Jordan was on the borders of the great empires of the Middle East and was crossed by endless conquering armies: Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans and Byzantines.

The first time that Islam and the Byzantine world clashed in Jordan was in 629 AD at the battle of Mutah near Karak. In 636, Syria, Jordan and Palestine fell under Arab rule after the decisive battle of Yarmouk. Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second of the Rashidun caliphs, established a system for governing his quickly growing Empire known as *ajnad* (or *junds*, military districts).

The modern state of Jordan covers parts of three of these *junds*: Filistin (Filistia or Palestine), al-Urdun (Jordan) and Dimashq (Damascus), whose respective capitals were Ramla, Tiberias and Damascus. Jordan

lay to the east and south of these cities. From 632 to 661 the Islamic world was ruled by the first four caliphs (al-Rashidun): Abu Bakr (632- 634), Umar ibn al-Khattab (634-644), Uthman ibn Affan (644-656) and Ali ibn Abi Talib (656-660).

After Byzantine Syria had converted to Islam, Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufian followed suit and was appointed Governor of Syria during the reign of the second caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab, around 639. Mu'awiya made Damascus his seat, replacing the administrative centres at Caesarea and Bosra. Soon after being appointed Governor, Mu'awiya began surrounding himself with the best leaders from various tribes as the custom was to form military units along tribal lines.

When the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan, was murdered in 656, the prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) cousin and son-in-law, Ali, became caliph. Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufian, then governor of Damascus, and one of Uthman's senior relatives, emerged as one of the leaders of a group seeking revenge for Uthman, and took up arms against Ali's caliphate for his failure to bring the killers to justice. Mu'awiya's Syrian, Palestinian and Jordanian forces fought Ali at Siffin on the Euphrates in northern Syria in 657 AD, where it was eventually decided to submit the question of who would succeed to the Caliphate to arbitration. Although the negotiations seemed to be going Mu'awiya's way, they were soon abandoned when Ali was murdered by a Kharijite (dissident) in 661 leaving Mu'awiya as the only person with sufficient power to establish a Caliphate. As a result, the centre of political power shifted definitively away from Medina and towards Damascus.

Mu'awiya inherited the Greek-based bureaucracy of Syria, Palestine and Jordan and the armies of the tribes from the old Arab Ghassanid federate kingdom that had guarded the eastern frontier of the Byzantine Empire in the sixth century. These tribes were either Christian or early converts to Islam and became the military mainstay of the Umayyad Regime. In return,



View of Aqaba



Mu'awiya protected the interests of Syrian, Jordanian and Palestinian tribes by diverting Arab immigrants from the Arabian Peninsula to other territories such as Iraq or Egypt. Thus, Jordan played an important role in consolidating Islam during the Umayyad age, a time of frenetic urban development. The desert of Jordan was crossed by busy roads along which towns and fortresses began to emerge.

A new administrative system was introduced in the region in about 695 AD during the reign of Abd al-Malik (685-705 AD). Arabic became the official language of the administration, replacing Greek (the language of the Byzantine Empire) and Pahlavi (that of the Persians). A new, purely Islamic coinage was minted, becoming so successful that it set the basic formula for Islamic coinage for centuries thereafter.

The wealth gained from successful conquest was invested in new Islamic buildings, almost all mosques. Knowledge of urban settlements from the Umayyad era has increased greatly since the 1980s and we also know more about secular architecture from the period with its impressive palaces in rural areas and on the edges of the desert in Jordan and Syria. These buildings are a very important part of the Umayyad architectural heritage, reflecting the taste, self-image and interests of the aristocratic elite, and offer a fascinating insight into Umayyad society.

The battle of Yarmouk (year 636 AD)

"Heraclius gathered large armies of Greeks, Syrians, Mesopotamians and Armenians together in a huge force about 200,000 strong. He appointed one of his most trusted generals to lead the expedition and sent ahead as a vanguard Jabalah ibn al-Aiham al-Ghassni at the head of the "naturalized" Arabs [*musta'ribah*] of Syria from the tribes of Lakhm, Judhâm and others, resolving to fight the Moslems so that he might either win or withdraw to the land of the Greeks and live in Constantinople. The Moslems gathered together and the Greek army marched against them. The battle they fought at al-Yarmûk [River Hieromax] was one of the fiercest and bloodiest in ancient history. 24,000 Moslems took part. The Greeks and their allies chained themselves together, so that no one might suddenly decide to flee. With Allah's help, some 70,000 of them were killed, with the rest taking flight, reaching as far as Palestine, Antioch, Aleppo, Mesopotamia and Armenia. Legend has it that various Moslem women also joined the fray, fighting violently. […] The battle of al-Yarmûk took place in Rajab, year 15 (636 AD)".

Kitab Futuh al-Buldan, al-Baladuri (9th century).

In Jordan, the excavation of ancient towns like Amman (Philadelphia), Jerash, Madaba and Umm ar-Rasas has shown that they were continuously inhabited from Roman and Byzantine times through to the early Islamic period, although particular buildings often underwent a change of use, were adapted or completely rebuilt. We know more about the Umayyad palaces in the major cities since the excavations at al-Qal'a in Amman. This palace stands within the old Roman fortifications of Jebel al-Qal'a, the citadel overlooking Amman. It has a formal reception hall that reveals the continuing influence of the Sassanid Empire, with architectural forms that are typical of the late Umayyad period. On the whole, there is clear evidence of a well-organized urban society.

The Umayyad period was a time of great expansion as seen by the string of castles and palaces stretching over vast areas of Jordan. The remarkable study of al-Rishah by Svend Helms reveals this expansion into remote desert areas. Al-Rishah is a collection of minimally preserved structures, individual buildings arranged in parallel lines with a mosque and large official buildings, forming a primitive urban settlement in what previously was a nomadic country. The complex of three *qasr* at Umm al-Walid shows an urban pattern of settlement with a unifying enclosure and a shared courtyard. Other *qasr* like Qasr al-Kharaneh, Qasr al-Tuba, Qusayr Amra or Azraq reveal the scale of urban development in the Umayyad period.

The Jordanian tribes played a crucial role in the establishment of the Umayyad Caliphate, whose rulers presided over what was one of the most prosperous times in the history of Jordan. In 750 AD, Jordan fell under the control of the Abbasids after the uprising initiated in al-Humaymah in the south of Jordan.



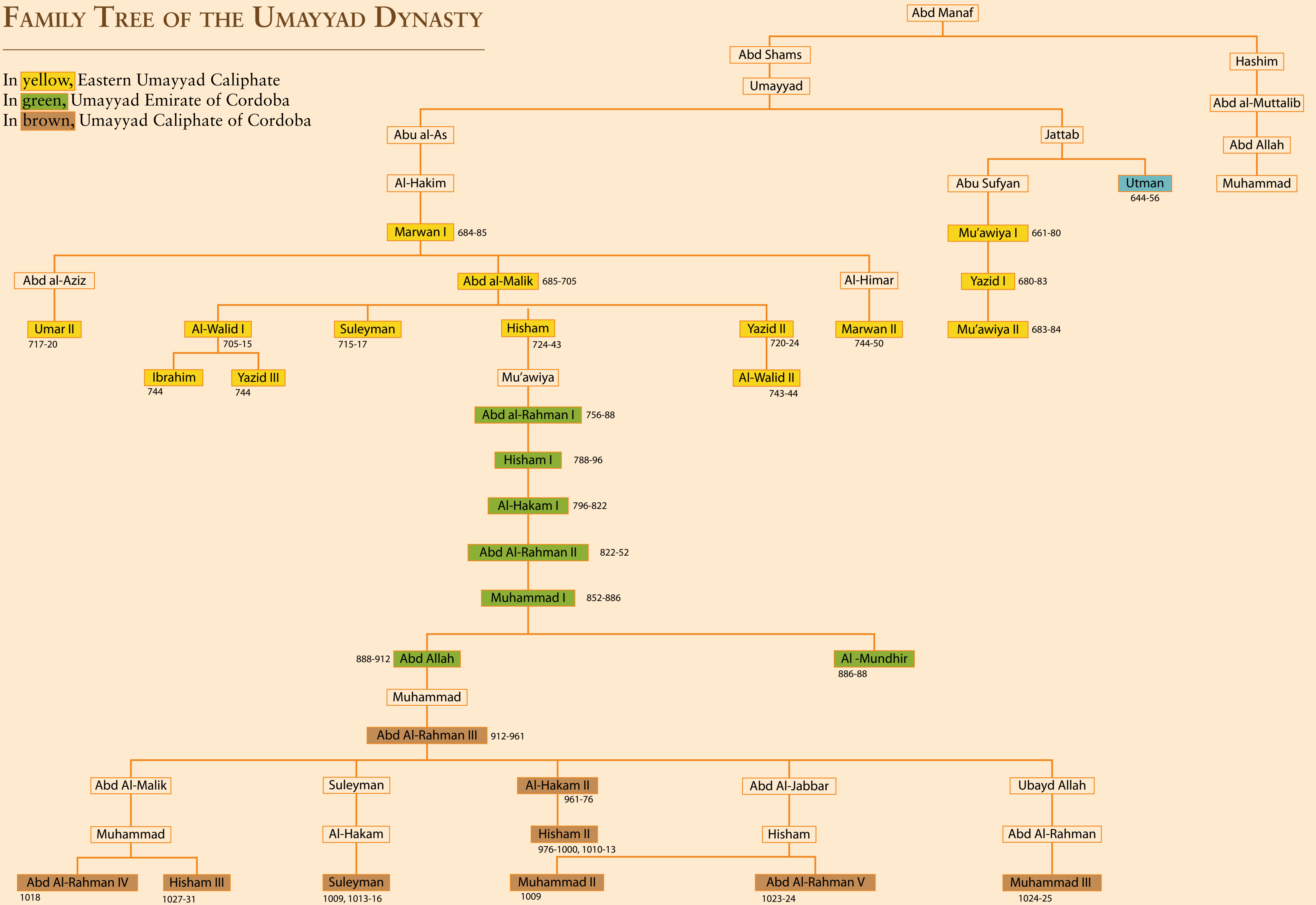
Palace in Amman, reception hall.



Qusayr Amra

Family Tree of the Umayyad Dynasty

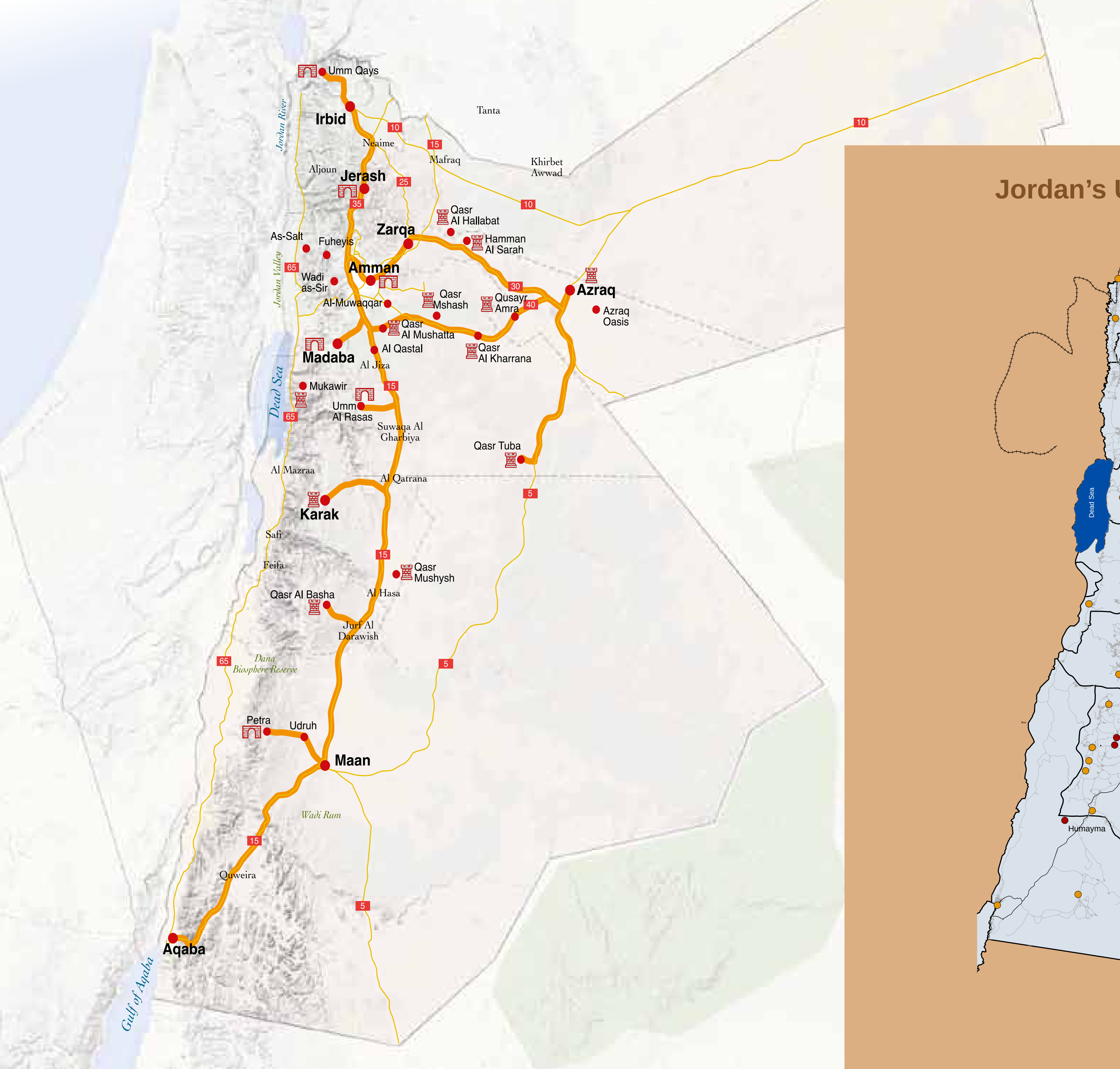
In yellow, Eastern Umayyad Caliphate
In green, Umayyad Emirate of Cordoba
In brown, Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba



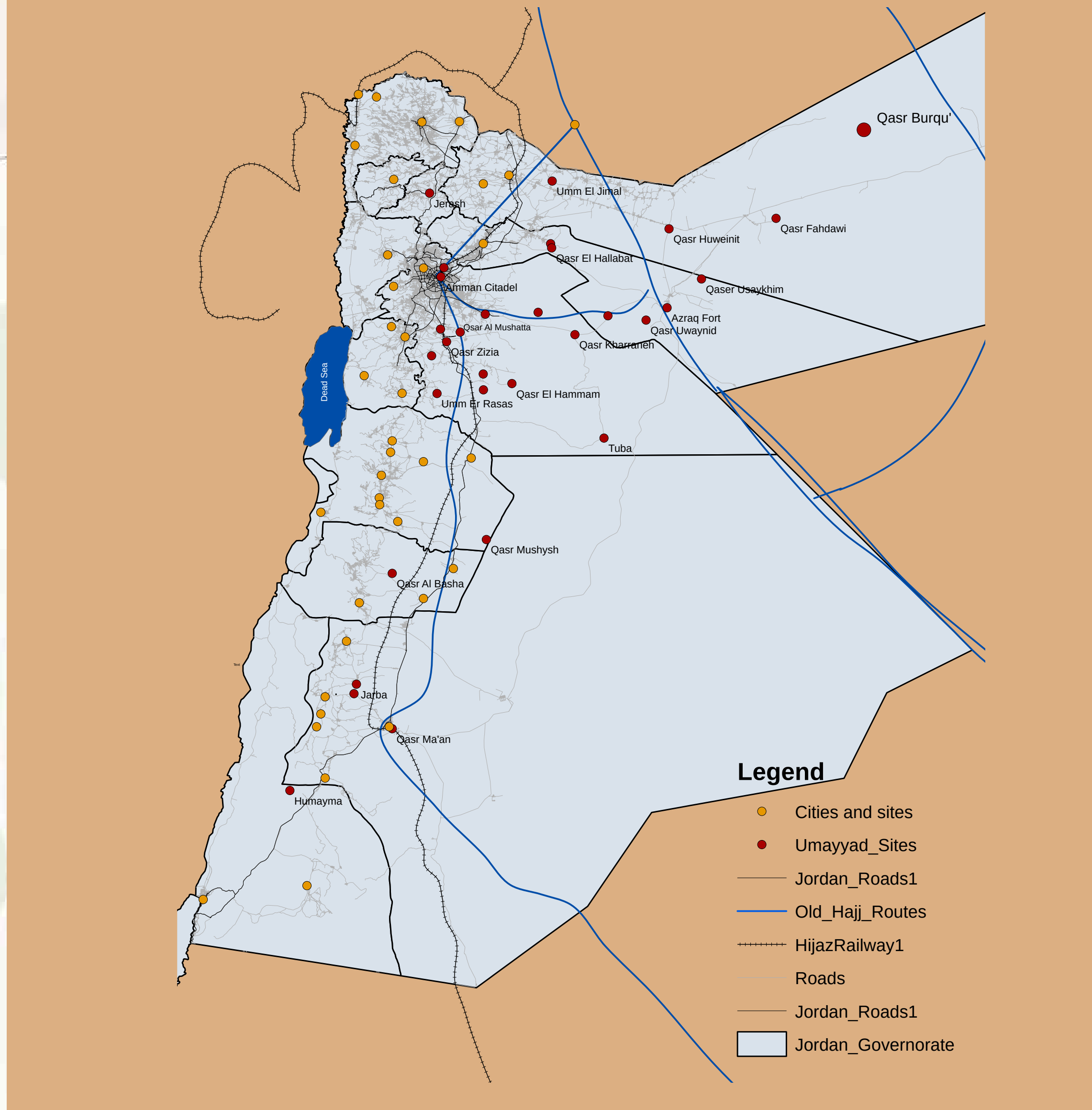
Umayyad Route



The Umayyad Route in Jordan



Jordan's Umayyad Sites in relation to other Sites



GASTRONOMY

IN JORDAN

Umayyad and Modern Arab Food. Gastronomy in Jordan



There are a wide variety of Arab dishes to satisfy the palette of every gourmet. Many modern dishes date back to early Islam when the most famous dish was *Tharid*, a favourite of the Prophet. In its simplest form, *Tharid* is bread crumbs soaked with meat broth, and is eaten with the hand. Many different recipes have been suggested over the years including some from the Umayyad era. The most popular dish in Jordan today, Mansaf, is a descendant of *Tharid*. Rather than going into detailed recipes of Umayyad or contemporary Abbasid food, it would perhaps be better to describe the general characteristics of recipes from these periods, noting that many of the sweet and sour dishes are no longer cooked in the Arab World. Today sugar sweetened meats are most popular in the Maghreb countries of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. Here are some common ingredients of Umayyad dishes:



a. Meat, especially lamb, goat, chicken and fish were the main protein source in the Umayyad diet.

b. Meat was often prepared in sweet and sour recipes. Honey, sugar, and fruit, both dried and fresh, were used generously to enhance the taste. Common examples were oranges, figs, dates, pomegranates, raisins and apricots. Lemon juice was also used.

c. Various spices were also used.

d. Copious amounts of nuts were also added to main dishes. In particular almonds, pistachios, pine nuts and occasionally hazelnuts were used to impart a delicious taste. This was also the case for desserts.

e. There were many sweet dishes in this period. Honeyed pastries and dates with almonds were very common. Sugar syrup perfumed with rose water or *Ma' Zahr* (lemon blossom extract) was often used as a substitute for honey. One example, Lauzeenaj, is the precursor of modern Baklawa (a fine-leaved pastry with pistachio filling and sugar syrup). Milk and rice puddings were also eaten with honey.

These three books offer an interesting history of Umayyad and Abbasid food and a wide selection of recipes:

a. Lilia Zaouali, *Medieval Cuisine of the Islamic World. A Concise History with 174 Recipes*, Berkeley and LA, University of California Press, 2007.

b. Nawal Nasrallah, *Delights from the Garden of Eden: A Cookbook and History of the Iraqi Cuisine*, Sheffield, Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2013.

c. David Waines, *In a Caliph's Kitchen, Medieval Arabic Cooking for the Modern Gourmet*, London, Riad El Rayyes Books Ltd., 1989.

These and perhaps other titles dealing with Ottoman cuisine offer the curious tourist an opportunity to sample some Umayyad or Islamic dishes. We believe that trying these dishes would enhance the travel experience giving tourists an added sense of history and tradition.





Hommos

The most common dishes in Jordan today can be divided into three groups: Vegetarian, Non-Vegetarian and Desserts.

Vegetarian dishes

Most prominent on the list of vegetarian dishes is the *Mezza*. This is an assortment of vegetable dishes served as hors d'oeuvre before the main course, which is usually a mixed grill or charcoal barbeque. Although some of the *mezza* dishes are made of sausages and *Kubbeh* (minced meat with boiled cracked wheat, which is eaten raw, fried, or roasted), salads such as *Tabbouleh* (mostly parsley and cracked wheat), ordinary salad with lemon and olive oil dressing, *Hommos* (boiled chickpeas with sesame paste, water and lemon, ground and blended into a thick consistency), *Mutabbal* (puréed roasted







Typical Mezza (Mutabbal, Kubbeh, hommos)

aubergines with sesame paste) and *Falafel* (chickpeas, fava beans, bread crumbs and other cereals ground together and shaped into a patty and then fried in oil) are most common. A *Mezza* can include as many as ten or even twenty side dishes.

Lentils are the basis of *Mujaddarah*, a rice and lentil mix steamed in the same way as rice. This is accompanied by an olive oil salad and fried onion chunks. Lentils are also used to make a delicious soup. *Freekeh*, by contrast, is made out of green wheat stalks that have been roasted on an open fire. The cooked grains are separated and dried. They make a great soup but can also be cooked as rice and are normally eaten alone or with chicken. Wheat is also ground into a rough grain known as *Jareesh*, which can be cooked as rice. Similarly boiled wheat is often ground into a rough consistency cereal known as *Burghul*, another rice substitute.

Many vegetables are fried or roasted in an oven to form delicious side dishes. Notably *Gallayet Bandora* is made of tomatoes cooked in a small amount of oil with onions and sometimes eggs or even meat.

Non-Vegetarian Dishes

Lamb is the most popular meat in Jordan. Chicken and to a lesser extent fish are also common ingredients in some of our most delicious meals. The most popular dish in Jordan is *Mansaf*. This is made out of medium to large chunks of lamb on the bone. The meat is cooked in a *Jameed* broth. *Jameed* is made of yogurt which has

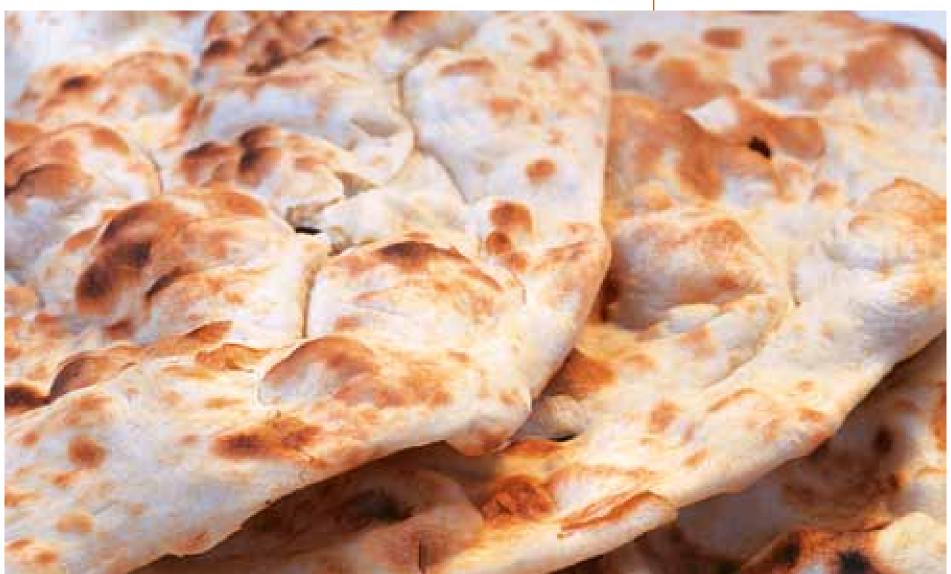
Kabab



been shaken until all the whey has been removed and the fatless liquid is salted and dried into solid chunks. When used in cooking, the solid yogurt must be soaked in warm water until a broth is obtained. Normally, a whole lamb is cooked for Mansaf, which is served on a large tray. First, a layer of thin-sliced bread known as *Shrak* is placed in the tray and then covered with rice. The lamb is placed on top and almonds and pine nuts, fried to golden brown are added as garnish. Generous amounts of sauce from the lamb are then added and the meal is eaten with the right hand only. Mansaf is thus a descendant of the Tharid. Sometimes people use *Jareesh* or plain bread instead of rice.

Another descendant of the Tharid is Fatireh, that is made of Taboon Bread that is not allowed to rise. This is baked in a traditional oven and dressed with Jameed. Tomatoes and onions cooked in Jameed may be added to the bread. The tray is then generously laced with *Samneh* (churned lamb butter) and the whole meal is eaten by hand. In another recipe, chicken is cooked with the Jameed.

Many grilled meals are eaten during spring using spring lambs and chicken, which are normally barbecued on an open charcoal fire. Sometimes *Zarb* is served. This is a whole lamb cut into medium to large pieces and covered in aluminium foil, which may be covered with mud to keep the steam inside. The meat is cooked in open ember fire pits, or placed in a barrel surrounded by burning embers. Cooking takes about an hour at the most.



Taboon Bread



Makloubeh

Meats are also cooked with rice as *Makloubeh*, which comes in many forms. Each meal has a vegetable cooked with the meat rice mix. Aubergine, cauliflower, onions, fava beans are common ingredients of Makloubeh. Another popular dish is *Warak Dawali*, a minced meat and rice mix with some butter stuffed in vine leaves, courgettes and aubergines. Cabbage leaves can also be used in which case the dish is known as *Yakhnet Malfouf*. Meat soups and stews are also very common and are prepared with a wide variety of vegetables. The stews are always eaten with rice.



Sweets

Many sweet dishes in Jordan and Bilad al-Sham use perfumed sugar syrup with pastries. Of these, *Kunafah* made of white cheese and special pastry is the most important. *Baklawa* and *Burma* are pistachio-filled pastries which are similarly sweetened. Syrup is also used in fried dough such as *Auwamah* and *Asabe' Zeinab*. *Halawa* is a mix of sesame paste and sugar, garnished with pistachios and walnuts. Dried fruits and jams are also very common.





Mansaf

Mansaf, the Jordanian national dish

Jordan is multicultural, but if there's one thing that unites everybody, it is Mansaf - a rich and plentiful melange of rice, lamb and rehydrated yoghurt. Such is Mansaf's significance and popularity, that it is generally considered to be the national dish. Its roots lie in Bedouin culture and it is emblematic of survival and hospitality in the most inhospitable of desert conditions.

For the nomadic tribesmen who herded their goats and camels in search of pasture and water amid the harshness of the sands, Mansaf was vital. Owing to the scarcity of water, it was made with dried ingredients such as rice and hardened yogurt called 'jameed', which could easily be transported by the nomads. It would be served on a large platter, and everyone would get a share, especially wayward travellers who had been invited into the Bedouin tents as shelter from the unforgiving dunes. This gesture of hospitality in the face of hardship remains a defining feature of Jordanian culture today.

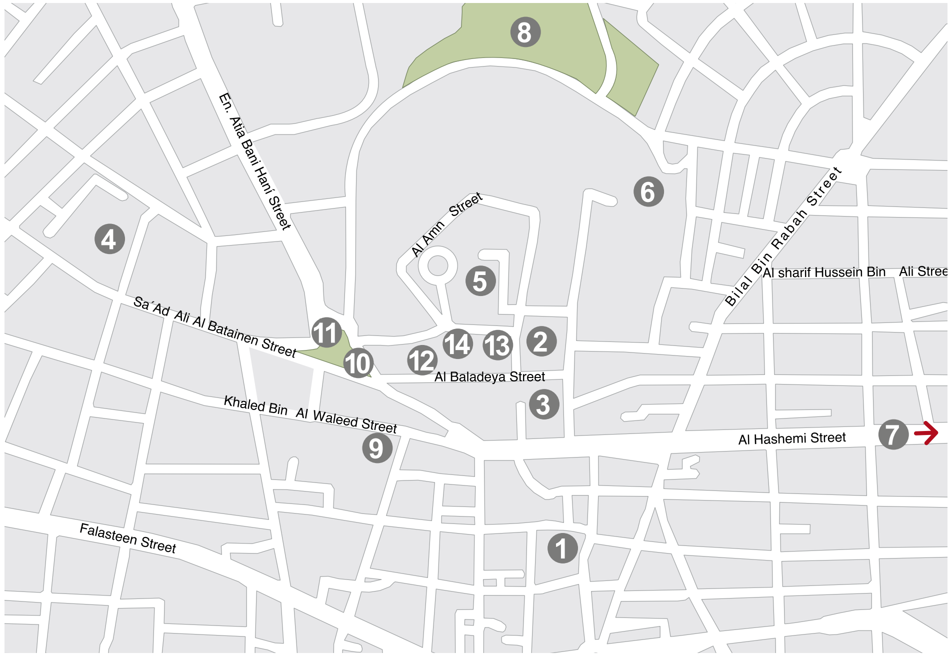
Mansaf is eaten at weddings, religious festivals and other special occasions. You can also try it any time in many traditional restaurants. Regardless of whether you choose lamb or chicken, the meat will be cooked with a subtle blend of 'baharat' spices, and the plate will be beautifully garnished with pine nuts and chopped parsley.

For more information visit: http://visitjordan.com/food/

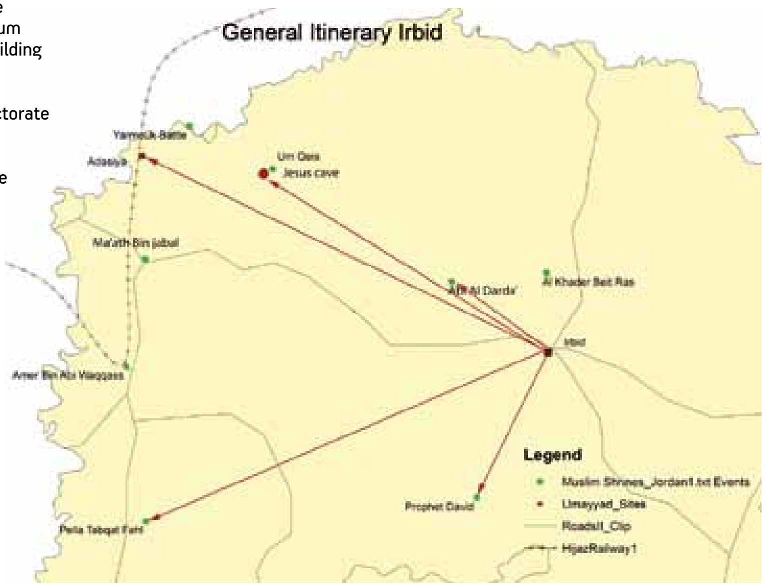
Itineraries

UMMAYAD ROUTE

Irbid



1. Greater Irbid Mosque
2. Dar As-Saraya Museum
3. Irbid Municipality Building
4. Latin Church
5. Irbid Police
6. Irbid Education Directorate
7. Al-Hashimi Mosque
8. Islamic Cemetery
9. Irbid Mamluk Mosque
10. Fo'raa Square
11. Al-Nabulsi House
12. Arar House
13. Tell Mosque (Citadel Mosque)
14. Orthodox Church





Ruins of Pella

The city of Umm Qais (Gadara)

Irbid is located in the highlands of northern Jordan, where the average altitude is 620 meters above sea level. It is the capital of Irbid Governorate and has about 1,018,700 inhabitants. It is well connected to other towns and cities in Jordan by a modern road network.

The city has a lively community with a large university. In the past few decades, it has grown very fast due to a large increase in population. The original city was formed at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth around a hill known as the Mount (Tal), and the new city extended to the south of it. In the twentieth century, Irbid became the most important commercial and administrative centre in the north of Jordan; it has a Central Business District





Pella

(C.B.D.) and shares commercial and cultural links with more than 300 villages in northern Jordan.

Throughout history Irbid has been a hive of social, economic and cultural interaction at different levels. Mount ('Tal') Irbid was settled during the early Bronze Age and has enjoyed a continuous history of 6,000 to 7,000 years of human settlement through the Iron Age and the Roman, Byzantine and Islamic eras. The ancient city on the Tal was surrounded by a defensive wall made of large black basalt stones, with a citadel to monitor the surrounding area.

Known throughout history as Arabella, in the first century AD the city was a part of the Hellenistic league known as the Decapolis. During this period, Irbid was a major trading centre and the birthplace of Nittai of Arbela. It lies equidistant from Pella, Beit Ras (Capetolias) and Umm Qays, archaeological heritage cities that also belonged to the Decapolis.

Irbid and its surrounding area became increasingly important during the Islamic era. The city extended beyond the Tal. During the Mamluk era, Irbid was on the trade routes connecting Bilad al-Sham (Great Syria) with Egypt.

The Decapolis

After Alexander the Great's convincing victory over Darius III Codomannus of Persia at Issus in about 333 BC, the region east of the Euphrates became increasingly exposed to Greek influence and culture. Two of Alexander's generals established the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties. Several autonomous Hellenised cities prospered due to their economic and cultural ties rather than as is mistakenly believed due to a loose federation set up to counter the indigenous Semitic population (Jews, Arab Nabataeans, and Aramaean), who were sometimes not sympathetic to Hellenism. In 63 BC, the Roman General Pompey conquered the region and the cities, which in their new heavily Roman cultural settings, were encouraged to prosper under the rule of the Governor of Damascus. Although Decapolis (deka=ten) means ten cities, it is believed that there may in fact have been 14 and perhaps even more. Only the Nabataeans avoided direct conquest, maintaining an alliance with the Romans until 106 AD when Trajan annexed the Arabian territories. Pliny the Elder listed the ten cities (the most important are in Jordan) as Scythopolis, Hippos (Antiochia or Antioch Hippos), Gadara (Umm Qays), Raphana, Dion (or Dium), Pella (Tabqat Fahl), Gerasa (Jerash), Philadelphia (modern Amman, Jordan), Canatha and Damascus. Abilla in Jordan (Qwelbeh) was also mentioned as one of the cities. The cities continued to prosper in Byzantine and Islamic times and while some have since disappeared and only survive as archaeological remains, others such as Amman and Damascus continue to flourish today.

Visits

The historic centre of Irbid contains a mosque (parts of which date back to 1874) that was built on the remains of an older Mamluk mosque. It also has two other mosques; the Congressional Mosque and the Citadel Mosque. One of the interesting characteristics of Irbid's historic centre is that it developed according to the typical model for Arabic and Islamic cities. *Khans* were constructed, in addition to a large water pool. The pool continued to exist until the 1950s when the City Council turned it into the 'al-Aghwar' public transport station. Irbid had two traditional *suqs* and bazaars; the main one called Suq Irbid al-Qadim and the other Suq al-Khamis. The *suq* was also the centre of social life.

Tal (mount) Irbid, the citadel, which has been continuously settled since the early Bronze Age is the main landmark of the old city and played an important defensive and later symbolic role in its development. Al-Saraya, the seat of the Ottoman Governor, was built in 1886, on top of the hill where it stands alongside other buildings erected in the early to mid twentieth century. During the Emirate of Trans-Jordan (1921-1946) al-Saraya became an administrative centre, called Dar al-Hukoumeh and in the late twentieth century, the Department of Antiquities turned it into a museum. The museum collections contain large numbers of archaeological artefacts discovered during excavations in the Irbid area, ranging in date from the Palaeolithic to the Islamic eras.

Besides the existing archaeological site at the Tal, the historical city centre contains numerous heritage buildings that preserve regional building styles from the 1920s and 1930s. The historic centre of the al-Harah neighbourhood of Irbid contains numerous interesting buildings such as the al-Nabulsi house (turned into a cultural centre) and the al-Sharairi house (now a political museum).

Dar as-Saraya Museum

The building housing the Dar as-Saraya Museum was originally a castle built by the Ottomans on the southern side of the hill in the middle of the 19th century. Its floorplan resembles that of many castles and caravansaries founded by the Ottomans.

An inscription above the southern gateway bears the date 1304 H (1886 AD) implying that the castle became the new Governor's House (Dar as-Saraya) after that date. Over the years the building has been altered on many occasions, prior to the most recent restoration works initiated by the Department of Antiquities in 1994.



Umm Qais.
Roman Corinthian
columns

Surroundings

Umm Qays (Gadara)

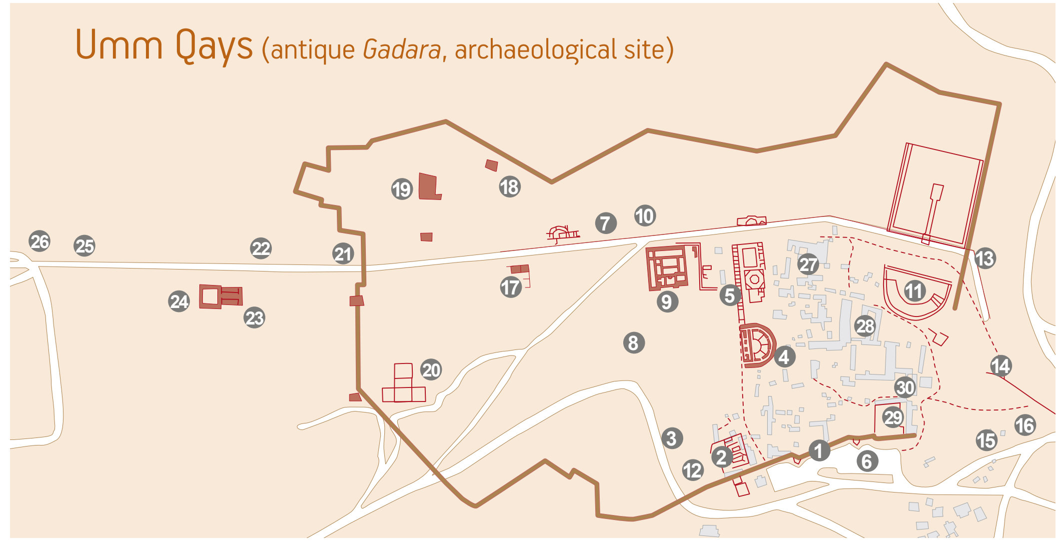
Umm Qays (known in biblical times as Gadara) was founded during the affluence of the Hellenistic period and flourished in the Roman years of luxury. It is the most important archaeological site near Irbid (around 30 km). The Hellenistic-Roman city of Gadara was a semi-autonomous city of the Roman Decapolis and was laid out in typical Roman city style.

Gadara's current Arabic name is Umm Qays, in which Umm means 'fortified' and Qays is an altered form of Gaius. In its time it was a cultural centre that was home to several classical poets and philosophers, including Theodorus, the founder of a rhetorical school in Rome.

The New Testament tells that Jesus Christ visited Gadara and cured two mad men nearby by transferring their haunted evil souls into a herd of pigs. Gadara participated in the ecclesiastical council held in Nicaea

Umm Qays





1. City Walls
2. Ticket Office
3. *Decumanus Maximus*
4. West Theatre
5. Basilica Terrace
6. Parking
7. *Decumanus*
8. Khaled El-Gindi
9. Baths
10. *Nymphaeum*
11. North Theatre
12. Tower
13. Water Tunnel
14. Tomb of Chairios
15. Tomb of Modestos
16. Tomb of the Germani
17. Sanctuary
18. Northern Mausoleum
19. Baths of Herakleides
20. Baths
21. Early Roman City Gate (West)
22. Tiberias Gate
23. Underground Mausoleum
24. Five aisled Basilica
25. Late Roman City Gate
26. Western cemetery
27. Resthouse
28. Museum (Bayt al-Russan Building)
29. Bayt al-Malkawi (restored Ottoman house)
30. Ottoman Mosque

in 325 AD and a five aisled church was built during the same century on top of the Roman mausoleum. Later on, the classical city was occupied by late Ottoman structures, and the city's Greek past was obscured until archaeological excavations were carried out. The Ottoman village on top of part of the ancient city was acquired by the Department of Antiquities, which now has several excavation and conservation projects at the site.

The old city of Gadara is perched on a hilltop overlooking the Jordan Valley and the Sea of Galilee where visitors to the site can view the Syrian Golan Heights, Mount Hermon, Lake Tiberias and the north Palestinian plains.

Its main sites are the stunning black basalt theatre, the basilica and adjacent courtyard strewn with nicely carved black sarcophagi, the colonnaded main street and a side street lined with shops, an underground mausoleum, two baths, a *nymphaeum*, a city gate, and the faint outline of what was once a massive hippodrome. There is also the wondrous Roman aqueduct, which forms an underground 'qanat' (channel), extending like a snake over many kilometres.

The Umm Qays Archaeological Museum, which is located in one of the houses in the Ottoman village of Umm Qays, Beit al-Russan (House of al-Russan), has two exhibition halls. In the first hall, various ceramic artefacts dating from the Hellenistic to the Islamic periods are on display, along with finds from the tombs at Umm Qays. The second hall is dedicated to statuary, mostly from the Roman period.



Umm Qays



Roman ruins at Umm Qais

Jesus cave

A cave known to the inhabitants of Umm Qays as the cave of Issa (Jesus or Issos) lies about four kilometres east of Umm Qays. The townspeople believe - as did their forefathers - that Jesus stayed in this cave while travelling to Umm Qays, in order to release its ancient people from paganism.

Al-Mazar al-Shamali

Al-Mazar al-Shamali, around 20 kilometres south west of Irbid, has a shrine to the prophet David. As a child, he slew Goliath with a sling and later became the second king of Israel after Sha'ul (Saul). David spent time in Jordan whilst at odds with Saul, as well as later during a military campaign.

The tomb of the venerable companion Abu al-Darda

The tomb of the venerable companion Abu al-Darda is located in a modern building in the village of Soam al-Shunnaq, 10 km north-west of Irbid. One of the most devoted and pious of the companions, he was always by the Prophet's side. Abu al-Darda was best known for surpassing everyone else in memorizing, narrating and passing on prophet Mohammad's sayings. He took part in military campaigns and was later appointed Governor of Bahrain province.

Pella

Pella (around 40 kilometres south-west of Irbid) is another Decapolis city where many interesting archaeological monuments are still under excavation. Important monuments include the 6th century West Church, the 6th century Civic Complex Church, the 1st century Odeon (Theatre), Roman Nymphaeum and East Church. Pella (whose current Arabic name is Tabaqat Fahl) was also the site of a battle between Islamic and Byzantine troops.

Pella





Pella

Adasiyyeh (or Adasiya)

This is a small village with hot springs about 10 km north west of Umm Qays. It has a small hotel with a swimming pool fed from the springs. It offers food and accommodation for those wishing to relax and enjoy the mineral waters. The hot springs were once highly regarded by the Romans.

The **Battle of Yarmouk** was fought out close to Adasiyyeh in August 635 AD (see page 13). In the face of Muslim expansion, the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius gathered a large army led by his brother Theodorus and took on the Muslim forces on the banks of the River Yarmouk in the northern tip of Jordan. The Muslim army was greatly outnumbered but their commander Khalid ibn al-Walid led them to victory, giving the Muslims control of Greater Syria. The outcome of the battle was decided when Christian Arabs defected to the Muslim camp thus changing the course of History.

Handicrafts in Jordan

A visit to Jordan would not be complete without an introduction to its rich legacy of ancient handicrafts. Traditional handicrafts in Jordan have been passed down over many generations, from a time when all Jordanians met their domestic needs by weaving their own rugs and making their own earthenware vessels and utensils. An impressive cultural melange of Arab and Islamic imagery is reflected in Jordanian crafts, which include beautiful handmade glass, practical earthenware vessels, skillful basket and carpet weaving, and exquisite embroidery. Crafts produced on a smaller scale include artistically decorated sand bottles, finely chiseled sculptures and uniquely crafted silver jewelry. During the past century or so, Jordanian crafts have benefited from the skills and influences of other diverse cultural traditions. Palestinians forced from their lands during the 1948 and 1967 wars brought their artistic heritage with them, as did Circassians and Armenians who sought refuge in Jordan in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Visit: http://www.jtb.com.jo/handicrafts.html

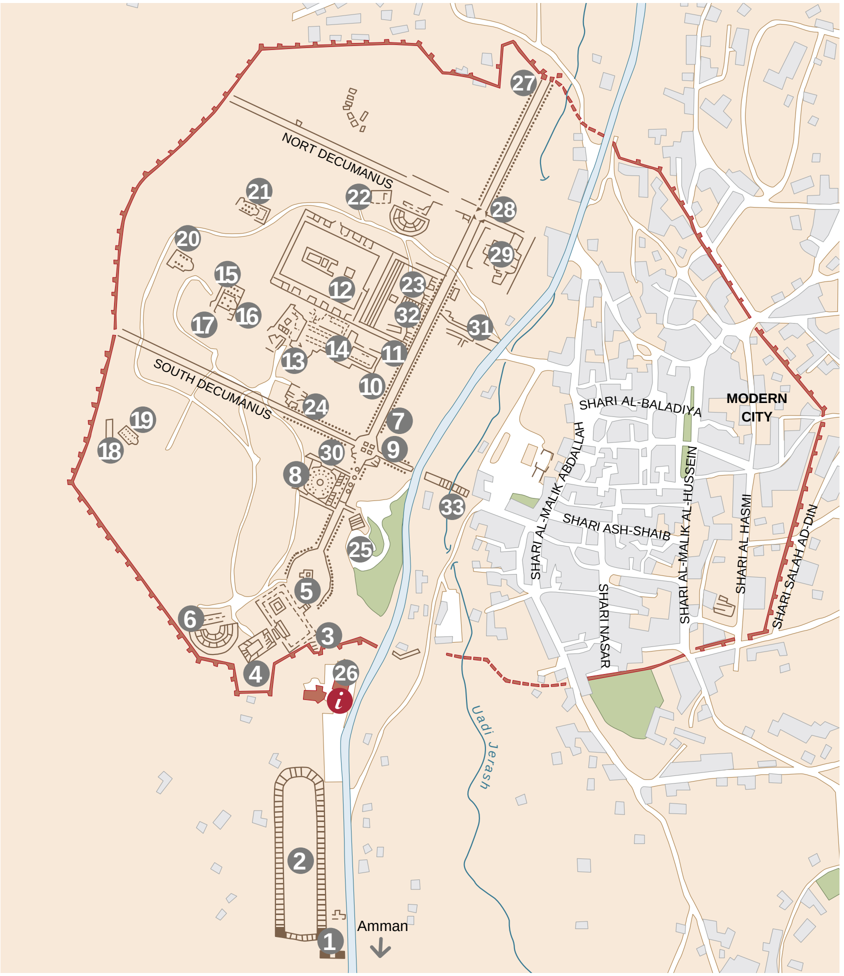


Craftsman decorating sand bottles





Jerash



1. Arch of Triumph
2. Hippodrome
3. South Gate
4. Temple of Zeus
5. Forum
6. South Theatre
7. *Cardo Maximus*
8. *Macellum*
9. South Tethrapylon
10. Cathedral
11. *Nymphaeum*
12. Temple of Artemis
13. Church of St. Theodorus
14. Courtyard of the Fountain
15. Church of SS. Cosmos and Damian
16. Church of St. John
17. Church of St. George
18. Mortuary Chapel
19. Church of SS. Peter and Paul
20. Church of Bishop Genesius
21. Church of the Synagogue
22. Church of Bishop Isaiah
23. Museum of the Mosaics
24. Umayyad dwellings
25. Archaeological Museum
26. Visitor's Centre
27. North Gate
28. North Tetrapylon
29. West Baths
30. Umayyad Mosque
31. Church of the Propylaea
32. Propylaea of the temple of Artemis
33. South Bridge

(i) Tourist Information



South theatre, Jerash

Hadrian's arch and colonnaded street, Jerash

Jerash lies on a flat fertile basin. It was settled and built in the early second century BC, most likely under the Hellenistic Seleucid Dynasty. In 63 BC it was conquered by Pompey and fell under Roman rule, becoming one of the ten great Roman cities of the Decapolis League. In 129 AD it was visited by the Emperor Hadrian, to whom a monumental Triumphal Arch was erected south of the city. It prospered and reached its peak at the start of the 3rd century AD when it was bestowed the rank of Roman Colony. As the 3rd century progressed, the main trade routes changed and Jerash fell into decline.

The city's golden age came under Roman rule, when it was known as Gerasa, and the site is one of the best-preserved Roman provincial towns in the Middle East





Nymphaeum, Jerash

and indeed the world. Over the past 90 years it has been excavated and restored and now boasts paved and colonnaded streets, hilltop temples, theatres, public squares and plazas, baths, fountains and fortified city walls. The city also boasts well-preserved monuments such as the Monumental Gate, the Nymphaeum and the Hippodrome. The city wall with four gates still survives in many places. It also has an underground sewage system. Its architecture, religion and languages reflect the coexistence of two powerful cultures, the Greco-Roman world of the Mediterranean basin and the Arab traditions of the Orient.

By the middle of the 5th century, Christianity had become the major religion of the region and numerous churches were constructed in Jerash. There are 18 churches, most of which have mosaic floors dating from the Byzantine period. An Umayyad apartment house was also discovered in the excavations. It covers about 600 m^2 with separate housing units sharing the same courtyard. A powerful earthquake in 749 AD seriously damaged the city and hastened its decline. The Crusaders described Jerash as uninhabited and it remained abandoned until it was resettled in the late nineteenth century.

The earliest Arabic/Semitic inhabitants named their village Garshu. The Romans later turned the former Arabic name into the Greek Gerasa, and at the end of the 19th century, the Arab and Circassian inhabitants of the then rural settlements and the later modern city of Jerash, which lies to the east of the present ruins, transformed the Roman Gerasa into the Arabic Jerash.

Gerasa, city of the Decapolis

“Adjoining Judea on the side of Syria is the Decapolis region, so called because of its ten cities, although not all writers agree on the exact list. Most however include Damascus, with its fertile water-meadows that drain the river Chrysorrhoë, Philadelphia, Raphana (all these three withdrawn towards Arabia), Scythopolis (formerly Nysa, after Father Liber’s nurse, whom he buried there) where a colony of Scythians are settled; Gadara, past which flows the river Yarmak; Hippo mentioned already, Dion, Pella rich with its waters, **Gerasa** and Canatha.”

Pliny, *Natural History*.

Visits

Hadrian's Arch

Built to commemorate the visit of the Emperor Hadrian to Jerash in 129 AD, this splendid triumphal arch was intended to become the main southern gate to the city. However, plans to expand the city were never completed.

Hippodrome

This massive arena was 245 metres long and 52 metres wide and could seat 15,000 spectators at a time for chariot races and other sports. The exact date of its construction is unclear but it is estimated at around the mid-2nd to 3rd century AD. Re-enactments by the 'Roman Army and Chariot Experience' (RACE) revive the days when gladiators and charioteers appeared before the crowds.



Hadrian Arch

Colonnaded street



Oval Plaza

The spacious plaza measures 90 x 80 metres and is surrounded by a broad sidewalk and colonnade of 1st century AD Ionic columns. There are two altars in the middle, and a fountain was added in the 7th century AD. A large column, which was recently erected to carry the Jerash Festival Flame, stands on a square platform in the centre.

Colonnaded Street

Still paved with the original stones – the ruts worn by chariots are still visible – the 800 metre *cardo* was the architectural backbone and focal point of Jerash. An underground sewage system ran the full length of the *cardo* and there were holes at regular intervals on each side of the street to drain rainwater into the sewers.

North Theatre

The North Theatre was built in 165 AD. From the colonnaded stage, located in the front, a staircase led up to the entrance. The theatre originally only had 14 rows of seats and was used for performances, city council meetings, etc. In 235 AD, the theatre was doubled in size to its current capacity of 1,600. It fell into disuse in the 5th century and many of its stones were removed for use in other buildings.

North Theatre, Jerash





South Theatre, Jerash

South Theatre

Built during the reign of Emperor Domitian between 90 and 92 AD, the South Theatre can seat more than 3,000 spectators. The first level of the ornate stage, which was originally a two-storey structure, has been reconstructed and is still used today. The theatre's remarkable acoustics allow a speaker at the centre of the orchestra floor to be heard throughout the entire auditorium without raising his voice. Two vaulted passages lead into the orchestra, and four passages at the back of the theatre provide access to the upper rows of seats. Some seats could be reserved and the Greek letters used to designate them can still be seen today.

The Jerash Archaeological Museum

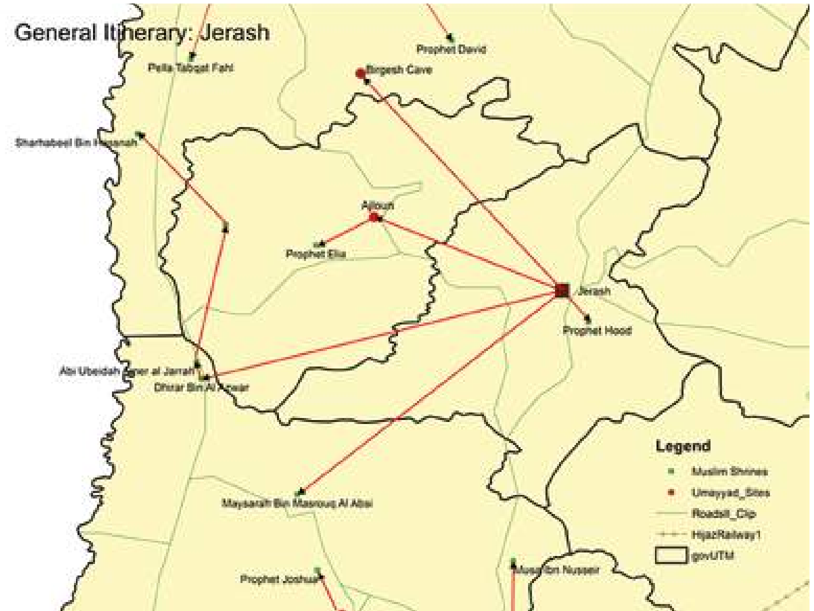
The Jerash Archaeological Museum was established in 1923 inside one of the vaults of the courtyard of the Temple of Artemis. In 1985, the museum was moved to the renovated old rest house. The museum is now devoted solely to discoveries from the Jerash region and its collections cover the archaeological periods from the Neolithic up to the Mamluk period.

Umayyad apartment house

The Umayyad apartment house was discovered in the excavations carried out at Jerash. It covers about 600 m^2, with 5-6 separate housing units belonging to families that shared the same courtyard. The units/ apartments were laid out on similar lines and most of them had two rooms; the front room for daily use and the back room for sleeping.

Jerash Archaeological Museum





Surroundings

Perched on a high mountain that overlooks Palestine, **Ajloun** is famous for its thick forest, its fine summer weather and its castle. Al-Rabad Castle is the only castle from the Crusader period in Jordan in a reasonable state of conservation. It was built by Ussamah, one of Saladin's commanders.

Close to Ajloun (5 km south west) lies a Byzantine church known as **Elia's church**, which was declared a pilgrimage site by the Vatican. It is equally revered as a shrine in Islam. In late summer and early autumn, figs and grapes from the numerous vineyards are especially delicious. Olive trees are just as abundant.

Jerash can also be a springboard for visitors to Birgesh cave (23 km to the north-west). This subterranean cave is not open to the public because it is too small, but the surrounding area is very beautiful with thick forests.

Ajloun castle





Ajloun castle

Many Muslim shrines can be visited near Jerash: Maysarah ibn Maqsoud al-Absi, Dirar ibn al-Azwar, Abu Ubaidah Amer Aj Jarrah and Sharbil bin Hassnah are all Islamic sites that are overseen by the Ministry of Awqaf.

Ajloun castle



Festivals

Jerash Festival is held every year with famous Arab singers and folk dance groups from all around the world. The Jerash Festival usually takes place at the end of July and the beginning of August. It showcases a wide array of singers, musical and folklore troupes, poetry readings, symphony orchestras, ballet, Shakespearean theatre, handicrafts and art shows. The colonnaded streets, plazas, and theatres of Jerash all provide unique venues for these acts, under the balmy summer skies of central Jordan. Inaugurated in 1981 by Queen Noor Al Hussein and now part of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation cultural programmes, the festival has become the premiere showcase for Jordanian performing artists, and an exciting meeting place for artists and people from the four corners of the world.

Roman Army and Chariot Experience (RACE) performance



Cha'acheel

The Cha'acheel is a local dish found only around the Rasoun area in Ajloun and is made of green leaves known as *loof* that have anti-cancer properties. The *loof* is sautéed with onions and made into balls by adding flour and eggs. It is then cooked with a yoghurt sauce called *labaniyyeh*.

Other entertainment events include the Roman Army and Chariot Experience (RACE) organized by the Jerash Heritage Company at the hippodrome in Jerash. The show, which is performed twice daily, except Fridays, features forty-five legionaries in full armour in a display of Roman Army drill and battle tactics, ten gladiators fighting "to the death" and several Roman chariots competing in a classic seven-lap race around the ancient hippodrome.

Roman Army and Chariot Experience (RACE) performance



Jerash, visit by John Lewis Burckhardt

"The present ruins prove the magnitude and importance of the ancient city; [...] The first object that strikes the attention in coming from Souf, after passing the town-wall, is a temple (a). Its main body consists of an oblong square, the interior of which is about twenty-five paces in length, and eighteen in breadth. A double row, of six columns in each row, adorned the front of the temple; of the first row five columns are yet standing, of the second, four; and on each side of the temple there remains one column belonging to the single row of pillars that surrounded the temple on every side except the front. Of these eleven columns nine are entire, and two are without capitals. Their style of architecture is much superior to that of the great colonnade hereafter to be mentioned, and seems to belong to the best period of the Corinthian order, their capitals being beautifully ornamented with the acanthus leaves. The shafts are





composed of five or six pieces, and are seven spans and a half in diameter, and thirty-five to forty feet in height. I was unable to ascertain the number of columns in the flanks of the peristyle. The temple stands upon an artificial terrace elevated five or six feet above the ground. The interior of the temple is chocked with the ruins of the roof; a part of the front wall of the cella has fallen down; but the three other sides are entire. [...] The whole edifice seems to have been superior in taste and magnificence to every public building of this kind in Syria, the temple of the Sun at Palmyra excepted.

[...] Following the great street, south-westwards, I came again to the remains of columns on both sides: these were much larger than the former [...]. On the right hand side of the street stand seventeen Corinthian columns, sixteen of which are united by their entablature; they vary in size, and do not correspond in height either with those opposite, to them or with those in the same line; a circumstance which, added to the style of the capitals,



seems to prove that the long street is a patchwork, built at different periods, and of less ancient construction than the temple.

[...] The long street just described terminates in a large open space enclosed by a magnificent semicircle of columns in a single row; fifty-seven columns are yet standing; originally there may have been about eighty. To the right, on entering the forum, are four, and then twenty- one, united by their entablatures.

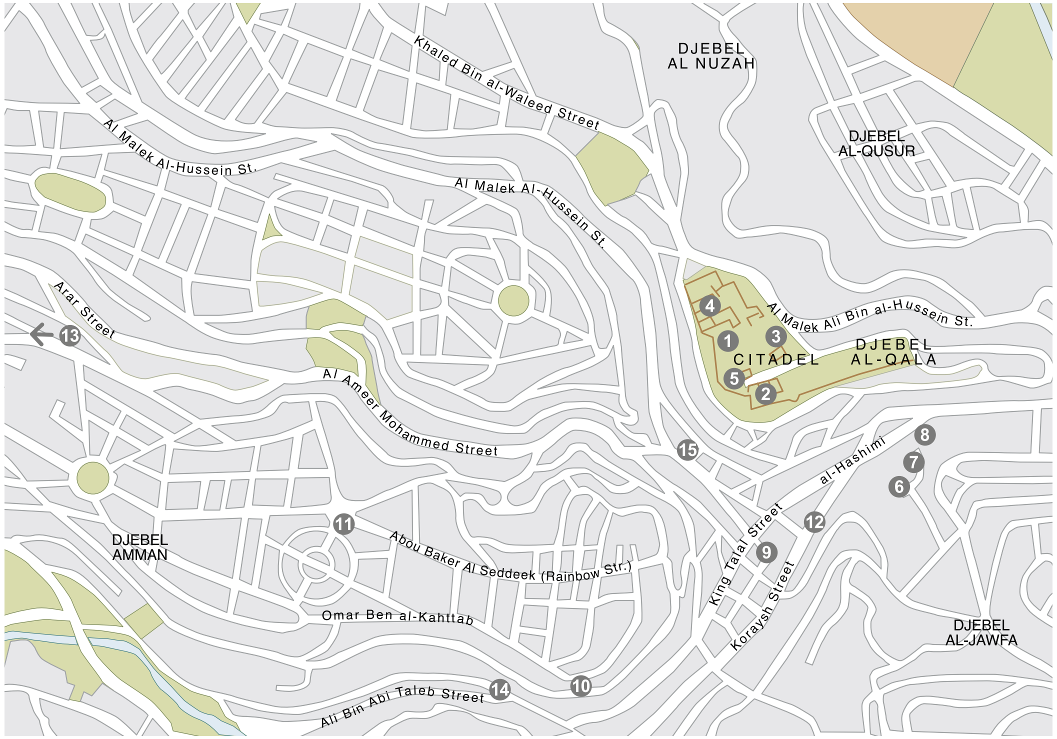
[...] On entering the temple by the front door, I found on the right a side door, leading towards a large theatre, on the side of the hill, and at about sixty paces distant from the temple. It fronts the town, so that the spectators seated upon the highest row of benches, enjoyed the prospect of all its principal buildings and quarters. There are twenty-eight rows of seats, upwards of two feet in breadth: between the sixteenth and seventeenth rows, reckoning from the top, a tier of eight boxes or small apartments intervenes, each separated from the other by a thick wall.

[...] The stone with which Djerash is built is calcareous, of considerable hardness, and the same as the rock of the neighbouring mountains; I did not observe any other stone to have been employed, and it is matter of surprise that no granite columns should be found here, as they abound in Syrian cities of much less note and magnificence than Djerash."

John Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*, 1812.



Amman



1. Jordan Archaeological Museum
2. Tower Abbasid
3. Byzantine Church
4. Umayyad Palace
5. Temple of Hercules
6. Roman Theatre
7. Folklore Museum
8. Odeon
9. Al-Husseini Mosque
10. Amman Boundary
11. King Abdullah I Square (First Circle)
12. *Nymphaeum*
13. Rujm al-Malfouf
14. Jordan Museum
15. Downtown

Amman is both the modern and ancient capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and is one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world, dating back 7,500 years. During its long history, Amman has been inhabited by several civilizations, although the first recorded settlement was during the Neolithic period. Archaeological discoveries in 'Ain Ghazal in eastern Amman provided evidence not only of settled life but also of artwork, which suggests that the city was inhabited

Temple of Hercules in ancient Philadelphia, Amman



by an advanced civilization. In the Iron Ages, Amman was the capital of the Ammonites and was known as Rabbath Ammon. Amman and its surrounding region were successively ruled by the then superpowers of the Middle East: Assyria, Babylonia, the Ptolemeys, the Seleucids, the Romans and the Umayyads (7th century AD). Ammon was rebuilt by Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-247 BC) and renamed Philadelphia in his honour. Under Roman rule, Philadelphia was reconstructed in typically grand Roman style with the completion of two levels –the Upper (the citadel) and the Lower city (the modern downtown)– and became part of the Decapolis League of ten cities. Philadelphia, the southernmost of the Decapolis, richly decorated with historic monuments and buildings in the same way as the other 'twinned' cities, was on the most important road in the region, the Via Nova Trajana, which ran from Bosra in the north through Philadelphia to Aqaba on the Red Sea.



Amman Citadel and Umayyad Palace Complex



General view of Amman

In the early Christian period Philadelphia became the seat of a bishopric and several churches were built there. One of the churches can be seen on the city's Citadel. In the early Islamic period Philadelphia was renamed Amman and flourished under the Umayyads, who built a mosque and governor's residence on top of the citadel hill. The tide changed with the arrival of the Abbasids, but centuries later, the Ottoman sultan Abdul Hameed put Amman back on the commercial map when he decided to build the Hejaz railway linking Damascus and Medina, facilitating both the annual *hajj* pilgrimage and permanent trade, and opening an important station in Amman.

Amman's modern history rekindled in the late 19th century, when the Ottomans resettled Circassian emigrants there in 1878 and later Armenians. As



King Abdullah mosque, Amman

the Great Arab Revolt progressed and the State of Transjordan was established, prince Abdullah ibn al-Hussein -founder of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan- made Amman capital of Trans-Jordan in 1923 and later the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom in 1946. Since then, Amman has grown rapidly into a modern, thriving metropolis of well over 4 million people. It is a city of contrasts of old and new, built on a series of deep *wadis* (valleys) and rising *jabals* (hills), where houses and buildings spread along the *wadi* and the more accessible slopes. The commercial heart of the city is in the *wadi* where most of the businesses and shops are concentrated. The downtown commercial area is famous for King Talal street, the al-Husseini mosque, the vegetable market, and al-Hashemi street, where there are cafés and workshops run by local craftsmen, in addition to the restored Roman theatre. Evidence of Amman's ancient past is everywhere, with new buildings and traditional shops intermingling in different parts of the old city. The newer residential suburbs consist of avenues flanked by elegant, almost uniformly white houses faced with local stone. Amman's steep slopes mean that there are numerous flights of steps connecting the hills and downtown. Two wonderful stair trails connect Jabal Qalaa with al-Hashemi street, traversing the Roman Theatre and the Nymphaeum.



Visits

Amman Citadel and the Umayyad Palace Complex

Amman Citadel (Jabal Qalaa) and the Umayyad Palace Complex is one of Amman's most important archaeological sites and was once the setting for the ancient city of Rabbath Ammon. It stands 837 meters above sea-level, the highest point in Amman. The main ruins on the hill today are from Roman to early Islamic. There are also excellent views across the city and down onto the Roman theatre and the city centre. There are flights of stairs on either side of the viewpoint which are easy to climb and descend. The most prominent features of this impressive and important site are: the Umayyad City (palace, mosque, cistern), the great Roman Temple of Hercules (62-166 AD), which dominates the scene, the small Byzantine Church from the 5th-6th centuries and the first archaeological museum of Jordan. This is a good place to begin a tour of the archaeological sites of the city.



Audience Hall, Umayyad Palace Complex



The Umayyad Palace Complex

The Umayyad Palace Complex dates from 720-750 AD. The great monumental gateway with its cruciform shape and four vaulted niches leads to a courtyard and colonnaded street, which runs through the Complex with ruined buildings on either side. The Palace Complex was built over the remains of Roman constructions from which building materials were removed by the Umayyads for use in various new constructions. The complex was probably built during the reign of the Umayyad caliph Hisham (724-743 AD) and was used as an administrative centre and governor's residence. In addition to being the mansion of one of the Governors of the Territory of Jordan during the Umayyad dynasty, the palace was also used by subsequent occupiers such as the Fatimids, the Mamluks, etc. The Audience Hall is the most significant part of the whole palace complex. It is one of the most famous archaeological buildings not only in Amman citadel but in the whole of Jordan. It was built by Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan

as a reception hall where he could meet his generals. In 1998 a modern roof was installed in the form of wooden dome to allow the hall to be used more easily for cultural events. The remains of a large Umayyad mosque oriented towards Mecca are also located just outside the complex. In 749 AD a strong earthquake destroyed many of these buildings and around a year later, the Abbasids (750-969) overthrew the Umayyads and renovated and redivided the residential units into smaller rooms using wall partitions that were cruder than the previous ones.

There was also a bathhouse, a round cistern and an olive-press, all of which are now in ruins. The palace has a different layout and architecture from the rest of the desert palaces in Jordan, because it was built on the foundations of an earlier building, in addition to using the ruins of a Roman (or perhaps Byzantine) temple in its construction, which is why the ground floor is uneven.



Audience Hall

Rujm al-Malfouf

Located in Jabal Amman between the 3rd-4th circle next to the Department of Antiquities, Rujm al-Malfouf is an Ammonite tower which dates back to the late Iron Age. It was built as a fortification system to protect Rabbath Ammon against Hebrew attacks, although some historians suggest that towers like this one may have had agricultural purposes.

The restored Roman Theatre

It dates back to the 2nd century AD. Built into three sides of the hillside, it seats around 6,000 people and is still used for performances today.

Roman Theatre



The Roman Forum

This is a public square, bordered by the theatre and the Odeon, which was amongst the largest in the Roman Empire (100 x 50 metres). The row of columns in front of the theatre is all that remains of the colonnades that once flanked it.

The *Nymphaeum*

Roman cities always contained ornamental gardens and ancient Philadelphia was no exception. The main fountain is close to the theatre complex and dates back to the end of the 2nd century AD.

The Grand Husseini Mosque

A short stroll through the throbbing streets of the heart of downtown Amman and the glittering famous Gold Souq takes you to the Grand Husseini Mosque. This Ottoman style mosque was rebuilt using striking pink-and-white stone in 1924 by the late King Abdullah I on the site of an ancient mosque built originally in 640 AD by Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph of Islam. It is also thought to be the site of the ancient Christian Cathedral of Philadelphia. The historic mosque went through various phases of reconstruction and has certain features, such as its masonry and arches, that suggest that it originated in the same early Umayyad era as the 'Dome of the Rock'.

The Jordan Museum

The Jordan Museum is in the downtown area of Ras al-'Ayn. It displays the history and cultural heritage of Jordan as part of the ongoing story of the nation's past, present, and future.

Jordan Archaeological Museum

Jordan Archaeological Museum was built in 1951 on the Citadel Hill in Amman. It houses artefacts from all the archaeological sites in the country. Almost all the archaeological periods are represented in the museum.

Among the most important exhibits in the museum are the plaster statues from 'Ain Ghazal, dating back to around 6000 BC, and the Dead Sea bronze scroll written in Aramaic characters. There is also the Museum With No Frontiers website which describes the Umayyad era in Jordan and the region.

Jordan Archaeological Museum





Amman, description by al-Muqaddasi, 10th century

“Amman, lying on the border of the Desert, is surrounded by many villages and cornfields. The Balqa district, of which it is the capital, is rich in grain and flocks. Several streams flow through the city, whose waters drive the mills. It has a fine mosque near the market-place, with a courtyard ornamented with mosaics. We have stated before that Amman has a resemblance to Makkah. The Castle of Goliath is on the hill over-hanging the city. It is also the site of the Tomb of Uriah, over which a mosque is built. Here, likewise, is the Theatre of Solomon. Living here is cheap, and fruit is plentiful.”



Surroundings

Two Umayyad sites can be visited in the desert, namely **al-Muwaqqar** and **Qasr Mushash**. The first (15 km east of Amman) was constructed by Abd al-Malik ibn Sulayman by order of caliph Yazzid II in 723 AD, as indicated in an inscription on a capital from a column used to measure the water level in the palace reservoir. This reservoir is part of a complex water system with cisterns and channels.

The **Qasr Mushash or Mushaish complex** is in an arid area 40 km east of Amman. It is about 14-19 km north-east of Muwaqqar and 21 km north-west of Kharana. The *qasr* complex was a caravan station on the route between Amman/Philadelphia and Wadi Sirhan. The main *qasr* has 13 rooms with a central courtyard and an eastern entrance. The oldest part of the site is the *qasr* itself at the east end, which seems to have been occupied since the 4rd century AD, as part of a network of Roman outposts in the Arabian Desert. The complex was used in Umayyad times for the same purpose and earlier Byzantine settlements are also evident. This large complex (2 sq. km), now in ruins, was once a grand settlement on the desert steppe. The structure known as the 'caravanserai', with a large courtyard, is the largest of the four square complexes in Mushash.

According to research by the Deutsche Archaeological Institute in Amman, the settlement had a large number of water facilities in the form of reservoirs, cisterns and dams. It had several spatially separate units with various functions serving the *qasr* and a bath. The large reservoir in the west located some distance away from the residential and other buildings was possibly used for watering animals.

There are two *qasrs*; the West Qasr and the East Qasr. The West Qasr is a small square building located near the centre of the complex and covers an area of about nine hectares. In comparison to its neighbouring Qusayr Amra, its bath is of rather modest design. The section to the west of the central area has smaller, multi-roomed houses and was probably a simple residential area, while the buildings northeast of the central area, which are noticeably different from the western houses in size and internal layout, may have been used for representational purposes. The medieval Arab historian al-Maqdisi mentioned that the Qasr was on one of the three routes from Amman to the Hijaz in western Arabia and was used by the Umayyad postal service.

Ahl al-Kahf (shrine, 8 km east of Amman) is on the road to al-Muwaqqar and the Islamic shrine of **Abdul Rahman ibn Awf** is only 16 km north of Amman.

Qasr Enwijis (**Nuweijis**) is located in northern Amman, on the Ain Gazal-Zarqa road, near the Tabarbour district, and was built in the second or third century AD.



King Hussein bin Talal Mosque



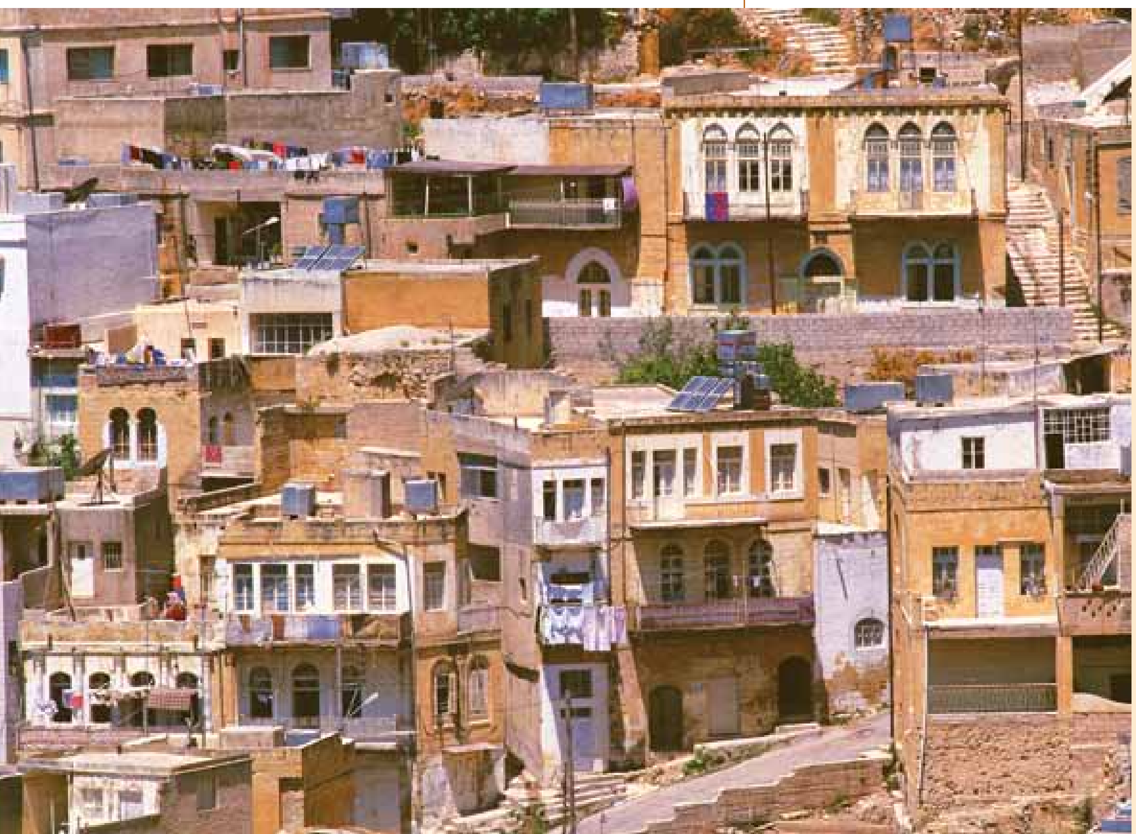
Surroundings of Amman

It is the tomb of a rich Roman family, with a square shape (12.45 m), built of white limestone. It consists of the chamber, a central square with sides measuring 9.70 m, around each corner of which there is a small room with an area of 1.70 m x 2.20 m. It is believed that these rooms were used for burial. The most important architectural feature is the dome. Islamic gold coins were found during excavations of the site.

As-Salt and **Fheis** are two nearby towns (19 and 24 km respectively north-west of Amman) worth visiting with vernacular architecture climbing the sides of steep hills. Several old houses have been restored and the late Ottoman urban fabric has been adapted to modern use in a series of projects. A beautiful wadi (Wadi Shu'aib) houses the shrine of the prophet Shu'aib or Jethro. Another shrine called Al-Khader Mahes is nearby, while a visit to the prophet Joshua's shrine can be followed by a trip to the Jordan valley with its vegetable farms and citrus groves.

In **Wadi As-Seer**, 10 km away from Amman, there is a Hellenistic palace, known as Qasr al-Abed which according to the 1st century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus was built by Tobias, an Ammonite Jew at the end of the second century BC. Some French archaeologists contest this version of events and believe that it was built by the Persians. Eleven caves carved by men, may have been used as stables. The *qasr* is in a charming little valley with plenty of water and is very much worth seeing considering its age and its beautiful lion and panther carvings. It has some impressively large stone masonry with blocks measuring 3 by 7 meters and was destroyed in the earthquake of 262 AD.

As-Salt, old houses



The arrival in Amman of James Silk Buckingham, 1816

"It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when we came in sight of Khallet-Amman. [...] Continuing eastward over the plain, and gradually descending, we passed, on our right, a circular building of a large size, called Khallet-Melfoof [***Rujm al-Malfouf***]. [...] We had now before us the large enclosed ruin called Khallet-Amman, or the Castle of Amman, which appeared, indeed, more like a fortress than a city, and occupied entirely the summit of a small steep hill. The exterior walls of this fortress had their foundation laid considerably below the level of the dwellings within the enclosure, and on the side within view; the western face, where the wall ascended like a sloping mole, formed a kind of case-work to the hill itself. The masonry of this was of the best kind, the stones being squarely hewn and nicely adjusted at the edges, with the centre left to form a rough projecting surface, like those in the castle of Assalt, and the tower of the Pisans at Jerusalem, after the manner of the rustic masonry of the Romans.

We went up over the steep ascent to this ruined mass of buildings, passing large heaps of fallen stones in the way, and at length reached the eastern gateway, by which we entered. [...] The central square open court appeared to be not more than twenty feet across, but on each side of it there was a range of covered buildings equally divided into three portions, the central one being a covered recess, and on each side of it a vaulted room. There is no appearance of the central square court having ever been roofed, as all around the top of the walls on each side is a bed of grassy turf, forming a walk on a level with the upper part of the building. The arches of the covered recesses, as well as of the vaulted rooms and passages of entrance, are all of the pointed form; yet at the same time there are lines of small niches in the walls all around the inside of the building, which are entirely formed of the Roman arch, supported at each spring by a small Doric column. The ornaments of these small recesses, which are all very shallow, were of various kinds. In some of the largest of them I noticed bunches of grapes and vine-leaves well sculptured, and in others that indefinite kind of pattern called arabesque. There were no traces of an inscription in any language, as far at least as my hasty search could discover, by which the age of this building might have been determined. The form of a Greek cross, which the divisions of the interior may be said to retain, induced me at first to think it might have been a Greek church; but on the other hand, its being originally open at the top, and at the north and south ends, while closed at the east and west, with the style of its ornaments within, and the entire absence of all Christian emblems, either of painting or sculpture, rendered it very doubtful to what purpose it was originally applied. The masonry of the interior is of a much better kind than that of the exterior; but the whole is evidently of a more modern date than the fortress itself, as it is built from the fragments of some older buildings, which probably occupied its present site, or were at least within the walls of the fortifications.

On the east of this building, and at the distance of a few paces only, was a large circular reservoir for water, well built, and originally surrounded by a moulding or cornice at the top."

Gastronomy in Amman

If you really want to know a city, you have to discover its street-food, and Amman is no exception. Amid the jumble of traffic-clogged lanes on the hills of the old east side, the clamour of daily life is perfumed with enticing aromas. They drift from little shops huddled at the base of apartment buildings, and stalls laden with bounties of seasonal greens; carts piled high with breads and nuts, and holes in the wall dispensing fresh juice with myriad health benefits.

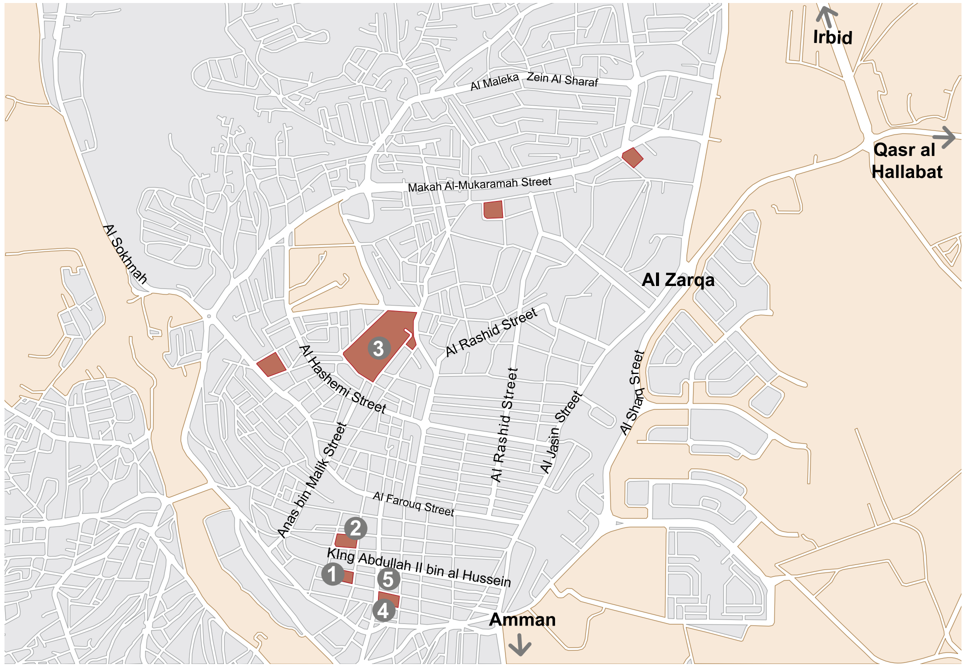
From the crowded souqs stretching back from Al Husseini mosque, to the warren of narrow streets that wind through the Downtown area, food punctuates the rhythm of Ammani life. If the desert is the home of Bedouin cuisine, then the streets give rise to a rich array of pan-Arabian treats, with influences from Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine and Iraq.

Tables spill out into dead-end alleyways, where creamy hummus, felafel sandwiches and bowls of steaming *ful medammes* (stewed fava beans) are relished. Crowds descend on *shawarma* dens, where wraps of grilled chicken and lamb are slathered in *tahini* (sesame seed) sauce. People meet on street corners to sip juice freshly squeezed from bundles of sugar cane outside cramped kiosks.

And since no meal in Amman is complete without something sweet and sticky to finish, clusters of pastry shops send sugar addicts onto the pavements, excitedly clutching their wares in paper bags. Baklava pastries of every shape are eaten on the go. The sugar-syrup drenched kunafe - soft cheese with a crumbly orange semolina crust - can present more of a challenge for the casual street eater.

Visit http://visitjordan.com/food/

Zarqa



1. Qasr Shabib
2. Abdullah Bin Rawaha Mosque
3. Royal Village
4. Chechen Mosque
5. Zarqa City Hall





Zarqa is the second most populated city in Jordan after Amman. The city was established in the nineteenth century, when refugees from the Caspian Sea settled on the banks of the Zarqa River, and grew especially quickly after an Army Camp and Palestinian refugee camp were established there in 1948. A station was built at Zarqa prior to World War One during the construction of the Hijaz railway along the Hajj route to Mecca. Zarqa is on the line from Amman to Damascus, which is still used today, especially for cargo transport. The city grew haphazardly into what is now a highly populated traffic-congested urban centre. Its western part is more modern with stone-clad houses similar to those in Amman.

The castle of Zerka by J.L. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*, 1812

“The castle of Zerka is built in a low wady which forms in winter-time the bed of a river of considerable size, called Naher Ezzerka, whose waters collect to the south of Djebel Haouran. In summer time the *wadi* to the east of the castle has no water in it, but to the west, where there are some sources, the river is never completely dried up.”

Qasr al-Hallabat



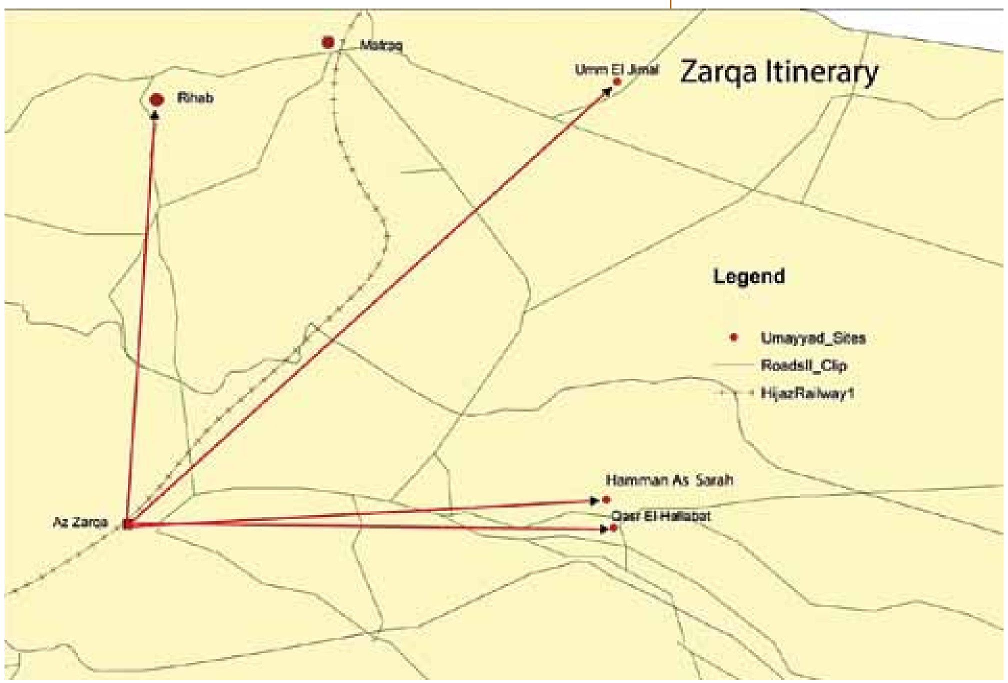
Visits

The centre of the city boasts a small castle called Qasr Shabib, which was built by the Mamluks from 1174 and is mentioned in the travels of the famous Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta in the 14th century. It was a haven for weary pilgrims travelling from Bilad al-Sham to al Hijaz. It was extensively rebuilt in Ottoman times (1516 AD) and was recently restored by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities. The castle has a commanding view of the Zarqa River Basin.

Surroundings

Zarqa is an important hub linking some of the most famous Umayyad sites in Jordan. Qasr al-Hallabat and Hammam al-Sarah are two major Umayyad desert castles which were restored by the Spanish Archaeological Expedition in Amman. Another Umayyad site is Umm al-Jimal, although it is also famous for its basalt stone remains and the ruins of some fifteen Byzantine churches. Passing through Mafraq you soon come to Rihab, which has more than thirty Byzantine churches. The earliest of these goes back to the mid third century AD and stands on the site of what may have been the earliest Christian church in history.

Surroundings of Zarqa





Qasr al-Hallabat

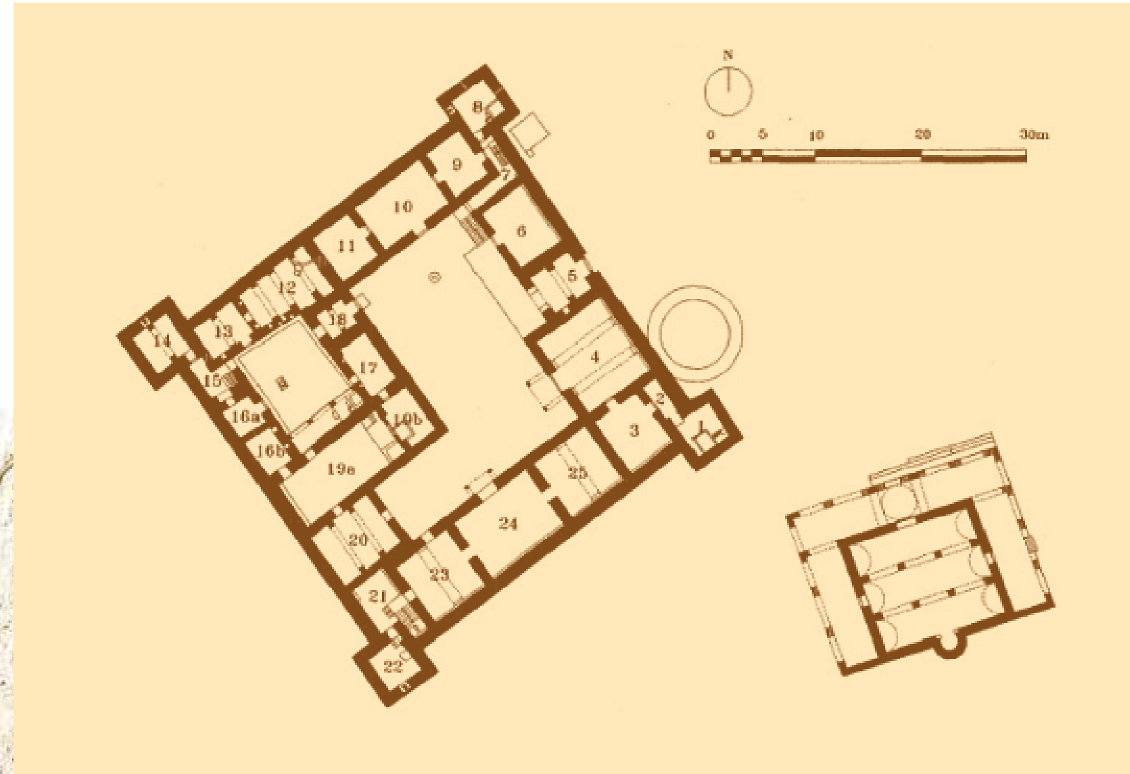
Qasr al-Hallabat and Hammam al-Sarah

Located in the eastern desert, around 30 kilometres east of Zarqa, Qasr al-Hallabat was originally a Roman fortress, probably built in the third century AD during the reign of Emperor Caracalla to protect local residents from attacks by Bedouin tribes. It was one of the many stations on the Roman road known as the Via Trajana Nova.

In the 8th century AD the Umayyad caliph Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik ordered that the fortress be demolished and a grand palace built in its place. The palace was constructed using basalt and limestone. It has a square floorplan with a tower in each corner. The entrance in the eastern wall leads to an open paved courtyard surrounded on three sides by square and rectangular rooms. The north western quadrant contains an inner central courtyard also surrounded by rooms on three sides. Each courtyard has a cistern.

Qasr al-Hallabat





Plan of the Qasr at al-Hallabat settlement (Arce, I. 2007, "Qasr al-Hallabat: Continuity and Change from the Roman-Byzantine to the Umayyad Period", *SHAJ*, 9: 325-356).



Qasr al-Hallabat

The remains of a mosque (10.70 m x 11.80 m) were found around 400 m to the east of the palace. It was constructed in limestone and has two arching *riwaqs* inside dividing it into three sections. Three tunnel vaults support the mosque roof and are surrounded by a portico to the north, west and east. An enclosure structure was also found on the site, which was probably used for agricultural purposes (e.g. cultivating olive trees).

The mosaics that covered the floors of the palace were excavated and thoroughly scrutinized, both in fragments and in larger more complete pieces. The mosaics were found to contain several different designs using geometrical shapes or flora and fauna to make up the external frame and internal divisions. Humans were also depicted. Other common features of the mosaic floors were plants and fruits, such as vines, lotus fruit, pomegranates and lemons. There were also a number of animals, such as ducks, ostriches, rabbits, an oryx, a camel, a leopard, a lion, a wolf, a snake, a bull, a goat, and a ram, some of which were skilfully pictured in animation-style movement. The Oryx, for example, seemed to be walking slowly with its head held high, while the wolf was running fast. The rabbit was peacefully nibbling on grass, while the leopard stood in an aggressive posture. Each room had mosaic floors with different themes of varying quality. Fragments of frescoes were also uncovered. These contained mainly floral motifs as well as some human faces, an animal (jackal or dog) and a griffin.

Mosaics from Qasr al-Hallabat



The palace also has a water system with eight cisterns and one reservoir, and a bath complex commonly known as Hammam al-Sarah, 2 km east of the palace. It consists of a rectangular residence hall and a bath, as well as an alcove leading from the audience hall to two small side rooms, each lit by three narrow windows. It has a very similar floor-plan to Qusayr Amra. The hall leads first to the *tepidarium* and then on to the *caldarium* and has two semi-circular niches each with a central window. The dome has eight round openings and is covered with rose-coloured cement on the exterior and shale on the interior. The Hammam was once decorated with marble, mosaics and frescoes.

Hammam al-Sarah





Umm al-Jimal

Umm al-Jimal

This large modern village in the Hauran region, 38 km north-east of Zarqa, is near an ancient site known as the “Black Gem of the Desert” on account of its primitive settlement built entirely of an unusual dark basalt stone. The ancient village appeared in the first century AD as a Nabataean settlement under the jurisdiction of the famous Syrian city of Bosra, which became the capital of Nabataean Arabia under king Rabel II (70-106 AD). Umm Jimal is famous for its inscriptions and housing complex, although little of the original Nabataean settlement is left today due to frequent reconstruction. Early on under Roman rule,

Umm al-Jimal



the village enjoyed some independence but this was lost after the Revolt by Queen Zenobia was quashed in 275 AD. A defensive fort was constructed and the village started to grow, only to revert to a rural backwater by the fourth century. Eighteen churches were built during Byzantine times as were the 150 houses that still survive today. Later, the Umayyads adapted many of the buildings to their needs, although the village was abandoned after an earthquake in 749 AD. The modern village was occupied by Druzes and Bedouins during the early twentieth century. Recently a project run by UNESCO's Amman Office is working with women from the community to help them earn a living, creating carvings out of basalt stone.



Umm al-Jimal



Hammam al-Sarah

Rihab

The modern village is 27 km north of Zarqa and 10 km east of Mafraq. It must have been one of the most important Christian centres in Byzantine times, as 30 churches were built there. The most famous of these, St. George's Church, may be one of the earliest churches in Christian history, although this honour is contested by another similar find (1998) in Aqaba. Some Jordanian archaeologists claim that St George's Church was built in about 230 AD although others express serious doubts about the evidence, claiming that the church probably dates from the 5th century. A cave recently discovered underneath the church may be a very important find. It is claimed that it was used as far back as the year 33 AD when seventy of Christ's disciples worshipped in hiding from persecution after his death. The cave has a circular apse with stone seats and is connected by a tunnel to a water cistern. Regardless of how old the church is, a visit to Rihab and its churches offers a thrilling experience and an insight into Byzantine Jordan.

Description of Umm al-Jimal by J.S. Buckingham, 1816

"I learnt indirectly, from a conversation that passed between two Arabs, in my hearing, one of whom had himself seen the place he described, that the town of Omm-el-Jemal was six hours' journey from Bosra, in a south-west direction, and that the place was large and full of ruins; among others, that of a Christian church, with many niches, was named, but it was added, that among all the ruins there were no columns of any kind. The place is inhabited by permanent residents, and at the moment in which this description was given, a party of the tribe of Beni Sakker Arabs made it the headquarters of their plundering expeditions."

Azraq



1. Azraq Castle
2. Children's Park
3. Azraq Wetland Reserve
4. Municipality
Tourist Information



Qasr al-Azraq

Azraq is a small city in the eastern desert of Jordan which lies 100 km away from Amman on the old Hajj road and the Hijaz railway. The nearby **Azraq Oasis** extends over 12 square kilometres of parklands, pools and gardens. It is the only water source in the eastern desert and is also home to water buffalo and other wildlife. Azraq remains one of the most important resting places in the Middle East for birds migrating between Africa and Europe. Over the past 15 years or so, the water level in Azraq's swamps has fallen dramatically due to large-scale pumping to supply Amman and Irbid. The abundant springs have dried up over the years as a result of the construction of numerous dams, although there are recent signs of revival. The small ponds are also receiving more rainwater flow.





Qasr al-Azraq

Visits

Qasr al-Azraq

The large black fortress of Qasr al-Azraq is located about 13 km north of the Azraq Junction, on the highway to Iraq. The castle is in an important strategic position with access to water sources.

The present form of the castle dates back to the beginning of the 13th century AD, when it was built from local black basalt rocks. The first fortress is thought to have been built by the Romans around 300 AD and the structure was also used by the Byzantines and Umayyads. The Ayyubids redesigned and fortified Qasr al-Azraq in 1237 AD, and in the 16th century the Ottomans stationed a garrison there. Later, Lawrence of Arabia made it his desert headquarters during the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in 1917.

The castle is almost square, with 80-meter long walls encircling a central courtyard, where there was a small mosque that may date from Umayyad times, along with the main well. The main gateway is a single massive hinged slab of granite. Above the entrance area is the room that was used by Lawrence during his stay.

Qasr al-Azraq



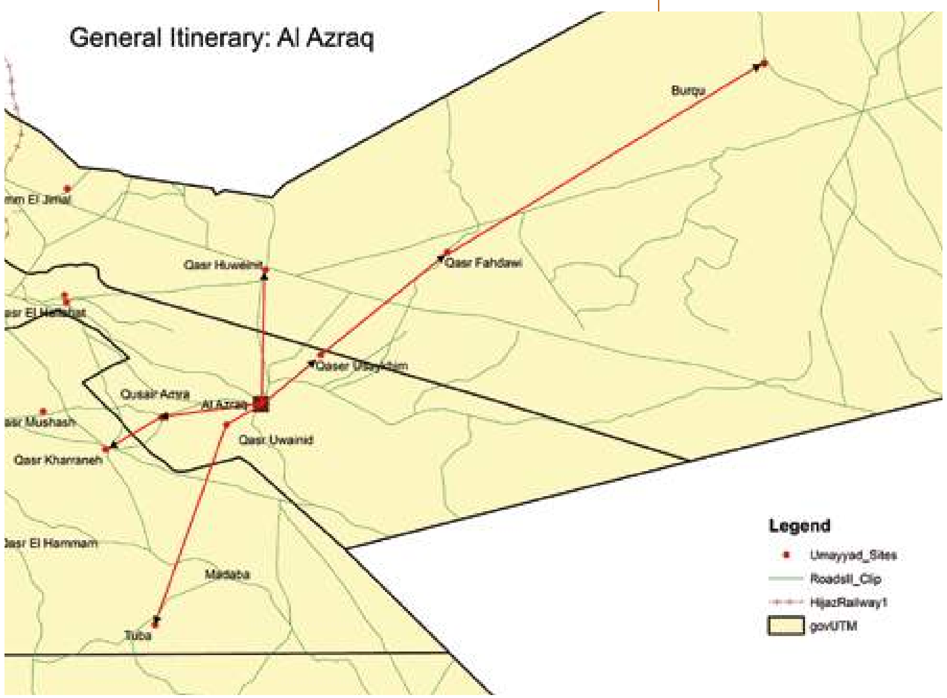
Surroundings

The region has several desert castles, of which Qusayr Amra, Qasr al-Hallabat and Hamam al-Sarah are the most famous. From this desert oasis, it is also possible to visit the al-Shomari Nature Resere and the Azraz Wetland Reserve, run by the RSCN (Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature).

Qusayr Amra

The Qusayr Amra Palace was registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1985. It is approximately 85 km east of Amman and 30 km west of Azraq. Located on the edge of Wadi al-Butum and built mostly of limestone, the palace consists of an audience hall, a bath complex and water transport structures. The main hall is divided into three aisles covered by barrel vaults, which rest on the side walls and two transverse arches. There are three high windows at the end of each aisle and two more in the eastern wall. The central aisle leads to two apsidal rooms with mosaic floors. Most of the designs on the mosaic floors are geometrical, except for the apse sections of these rooms where vine scrolls grow out of an amphora and interlace with geometrical shapes with a fruit inside a looped circle. There is a small shallow pool in the north-eastern corner of the audience hall.

To the left of the entrance to the audience hall is the bathhouse, encompassing three rooms, the *Apodyterium*,





Qusayr Amra

Qusayr Amra



Tepidarium and *Caldarium*. The *Apodyterium* is covered by a tunnel vault and lit by a small window. A plaster bench lies against the south and east walls, which was probably used for disrobing. This room leads to the cross-vaulted *Tepidarium* whose floor rests on basalt piers which allow the hot air to pass through to warm up the space above. The last room, the *Caldarium*, is covered by a dome that rests on pendetives and has four small windows. The walls of the room are full of holes, which were originally to hold the marble cladding. The floor also rests on basalt piers, with two recesses sitting slightly lower than the main floor, used as basins or bathtubs. A tunnel-vaulted passage to the east side of the third room leads to the stoke-hole and furnace, which once had a water tank above it to supply the third room with water. A well and a water tank are located by the main entrance. The well has a system for drawing water. Two pipes lead from the elevated tank to the shallow



Waterwheel, Qusayr Amra



Mural painting, Qusayr Amra

fountain in the audience hall and the tank above the furnace passage.

The external wall is covered by a thin patina carried by the desert wind that gives it a homogenous ochre colour. Traces of a plaster finish were found on the rear of the building. No gutters were found.

The palace is similar to contemporary palaces in the region. Similar walls were found in Qasr Kharraneh and Amman Citadel Palace for example, where the inner part is made of rubble, randomly placed in a grey, friable mortar and ash mix.

Most of the interior walls are covered by approximately 350 m^2 of mural paintings depicting court scenes, leisure activities, the caliph sitting on his throne surrounded by other contemporary monarchs (e.g. the Byzantine emperor Caesar, king Roderic of Spain, the Sassanian emperor Chosroes), hunting scenes with dogs, bathing scenes and dancing women, while the dome of the Caldarium is decorated with celestial constellations and signs of the zodiac. There are also various pictures of the crafts and trades involved in the construction of the palace: a blacksmith forging metal, carpenters, masons squaring blocks of stone, labourers preparing mortar and others carrying tools, such as saws, punches and chisels. There is a surprisingly large number of nude or semi-nude women and marine scenes, images that one would not expect to see in works commissioned by a Muslim ruler in the first half of the 8^{th} century. Different painting styles and themes suggest that the paintings at Qusayr Amra were done by more than one artist.

The images are constantly being revisited and interpreted by scholars. It was suggested that some of the scenes could be a visual translation of the love genre of Arab poetry with its attendant anxiety and distress.



Mural paintings, Qusayr Amra



Dome of de *Caldarium*, celestial constellations paintings. Qusayr Amra

Some gestures and facial expressions clearly reflect moods and emotions. Love seems to play an important part in the dialogue between the main figures depicted on the central vault of the palace. In pre-Islamic Arab poetry, hunting scenes, which are prominently represented on the walls of the palace, are usually associated with drinking wine (absent from these paintings), listening to music and indulgent women, who were often described as having plump ankles and rounded bellies. These paintings are important because they are representative of a key period when early Islamic art was still at a formative stage. They are part of the transition from Byzantine to Islamic culture and are influenced by Sassanian art and iconography. It seems for example that Sassanian princes frequently enjoyed the same leisure activities, which were often represented in Sassanian visual arts.

Recent restoration work on the north wall of the western aisle revealed yet more information about these paintings. For example, two human figures appear clearly on each side of the western aisle window. Letters discovered above the two figures to the side of the window offer clues as to who they are. One of them could be the prophet Jonah, given that the figure is shown lying under a tree as in many images of this prophet. The tree was provided by God for him to shelter under after converting inhabitants of the city of Nineveh. Underneath them a central figure lies on a sofa with curtains dangling down. The central figure could be the person who commissioned the construction of the building, al-Walid II. He is surrounded by four smaller human figures, each making a different gesture. The woman next to him is waving a *flabellum* fan, which means she may have been a slave girl.

Two inscriptions were found on this wall. The inscription above the window is in Kufic script without diacritical marks. It is not likely to be an official inscription as it was almost invisible to visitors to the palace. It is



Mural paintings, Qusayr Amra

therefore a private inscription invocating God in favour of al-Walid ibn Yazid. This inscription helps to date the palace roughly to the lifetime of al-Walid, either as a prince or a caliph. Another inscription was found underneath the central figure within a *tabula ansata*. This has the most prestigious inscription in the palace, which might once have ended with a date. Similar inscriptions were found in Hammam al-Sarah (painted rather than engraved, location in the main hall, size of some letters). These characters are in a form of Kufic script known as painted archaic monumental Kufic and are rare as they are only found in the eastern desert in Jordan in Qusayr Amra, Hammam al-Sarah and Kharraneh, places which played an important role in the development of present-day Arabic script.

Qasr Tuba

Located 100 km south east of Amman and 63 km from Azraq, Qasr Tuba was built by al-Walid II in the 8^{th} century AD, but like al-Mushatta was not completed. The palace measured 140 x 72 metres and consisted of two equal-sized square structures connected through a passageway with an entrance. The exterior wall has 14 semi-circular towers and inside there is a courtyard surrounded by living quarters. The palace is reminiscent of al-Mushatta in terms of building material (stone and brick), vaulted roofing, decorations on doorways, and it is likely that they date from the same period. The palace has three deep wells, pools for watering livestock and complex systems for drawing water considered unusual for its time.

Qasr Burqu

Built directly on a small lake 180 km along the road from Azraq, this structure is originally Roman and was converted during the Umayyad period into a watch tower at the edge of the Harra, a black basalt desert produced by the eruption of the Horan volcano in Syria. According to an inscription found on site, it was converted into a watch tower in 708 AD. The Qasr has a lake nearby that has water all year round.

Mural paintings, Qusayr Amra



Qasr al-Kharraneh

Qasr al-Kharraneh, located 43 km along the road from Azraq, is the earliest of the Umayyad palaces built in the eastern Jordanian desert. A very early Kufic inscription found inside the palace refers to the local governor of Jund al-Balqa, who was a contemporary of the fifth Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (r. 685-705). The construction and use of al-Kharraneh was therefore dated to his reign and has specific links with that of his successor caliph al-Walid (705-715 AD). From the outside, the palace appears like a fortress or *khan*, built for defensive purposes. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that it was used as a 'conference centre' where caliphs met with the local Bedouins or for meetings between Bedouin tribes themselves to discuss important issues and resolve disputes.

It is a three-storey rectangular building with high thick walls flanked by rounded towers on each corner. The towers are solid. The palace's central courtyard is surrounded by vaulted rooms. The rooms on the second story were living quarters, each consisting of a main well-lit room used for socializing and a smaller darker room used for sleeping or storage. The palace has very impressive ceilings, such as semi-domed structures supported on squinches and a cross-vaulted ceiling. The rooms to the right and left of the main gate were used for storage and as stables. An arched portico originally ran around the central courtyard supporting a gallery above and offering shade to those underneath.

Qasr Uweinid

Located on a low basalt bridge overlooking Wadi 'Uweinid, at the Middle Badia, at Zarqa provision station, 15 km southwest of Azraq, overlooking the Wadi al-Butum. It was built as a Roman fort to protect the source/ mouth of Wadi as-Sirhan in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. The medieval Arab historian al-Muqaddasi mentions 'Uweinid ("el-Awnid") as being on the caravan and postal route from Amman to Arabia via Wadi Sirhan. Most of the natural vegetation is still intact and the climate is classified as a mid-latitude desert.



Qasr al-Kharraneh

The fort was designed with a central courtyard with rooms laid out around it on the inside of the outer walls. None of the buildings are reported to have stood more than one storey high, except for the tower inside the fort. The Qasr covers an area of about 0.25 ha. (0.6 acres) and has an irregular ground plan with a projecting bastion with a small tower (about 8.5 m) in the south west corner, where a small entrance gate is located. There is an inscribed lintel between the entrance and the tower. Qasr Uweinid must have depended on the larger Qasr Azraq fortress, which stood a few miles away beside the northern pools at the heart of the Azraq oasis. Later during early Arab times, Uweinid is known to have been used as a caravan stop en route from Arabia to Amman.



Qasr al-Kharraneh

Qasr Usaykhim (Qasr Aseikhim)

The palace is located to the north-east about 15 km from Azraq Castle. It is not known exactly when it was built but both Roman and Byzantine pottery have been found there.

Qasr 'Ain es-Sil (Qaser Ain Alssel)

This is a small Umayyad farmhouse with an adjoining bath house, located just 1.75 km north-east of Azraq castle. It is also known as Qasr 'Ain es-Sol. The excavations by the Department of Antiquities in 1984 indicated that the Qasr may have been built in the Umayyad period. It is a small palace (4 rooms) built from black basalt rock with a bath (Hammam). The main Qasr is an irregular structure, built of basalt blocks directly on bedrock with no foundations. The remains of two olive presses were also found in the Qasr, indicating the importance of agriculture at the site and the spread of olive cultivation.

Umayyad Desert Castles

Jordan's desert castles, beautiful examples of both early Islamic art and architecture, stand testament to a fascinating era in the country's rich history. Their fine mosaics, frescoes, stone and stucco carvings and illustrations, inspired by the best in Persian and Graeco-Roman traditions, tell countless stories of life as it was during the 8th century.

Called castles because of their imposing stature, the desert complexes actually served various purposes as caravan stations, agriculture and trading posts, leisure pavilions and outposts that helped distant rulers forge ties with local Bedouins. Many of these remains are inside well-preserved compounds, all of which are clustered to the east and south of Amman.

Qusayr 'Amra, one of the best preserved monuments, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its interior walls and ceilings are covered with unique frescoes, and two of the rooms are paved with colourful mosaics.

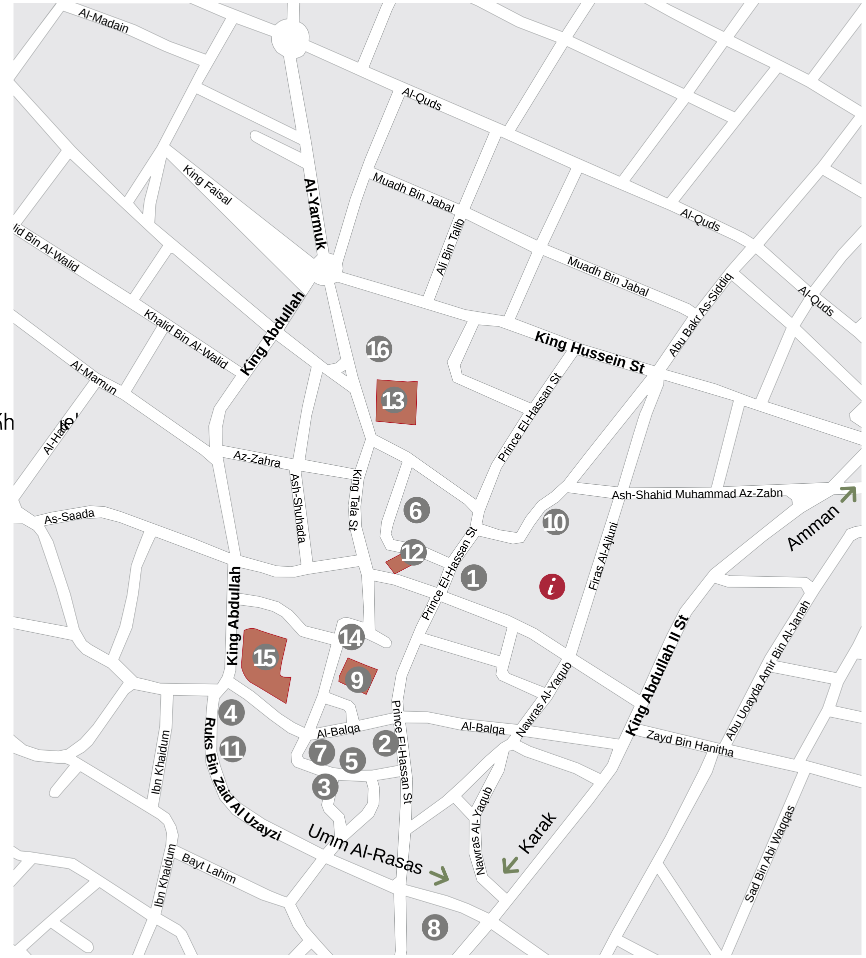
Qasr Mushatta, Qasr al-Kharrana, Qasr at-Tuba and Qasr al-Hallabat have been restored and are all in excellent condition. The black basalt fort at Azraq, in continuous use since Late Roman times, was the headquarters of Lawrence of Arabia during the Arab Revolt.

Qasr al-Kharraneh. Detail



Madaba

Qasr al-Kh



1. Archaeological Park
2. Beit al-Farah
3. Beit 'Alamat
4. Beit Sawalha
5. Beit Shweihat
6. Burnt Palace & Martyrs Church
7. Cathedral
8. Church of the Apostles
9. Church of St. John the Baptist
10. Madaba Mosaic School
11. Madaba Museum
12. Mosque
13. St. George's Church & Mosaic Map
14. Al Saraya
15. Tell Madaba Acropolis
16. Tourist Police Office

(i) Visitor Center

Madaba is a premier tourist destination in Jordan, famous for its Cultural Heritage and home of Jordan's Mosaics and Handicrafts. Madaba is located in the heart of "Holy Lands" with connections to people and religions that have shaped world history for 4,000 years and continue to influence the lives of people today. Madaba Governorate contains renowned natural, religious and historic sites and parts of the ancient King's Highway. Tourists who travel along the highway today are walking in the footsteps of countless pilgrims, armies and traders across the centuries.

Since at least 3,500 BC, the fertile and rich grazing lands around Madaba have attracted human settlement. A biblical story describes how king Mesha of Moab had to deliver a tribute of a hundred thousand lambs and the wool from a hundred thousand rams

General view from Mont Nebo





Mont Nebo

to his enemies. After finally defeating them, Mesha erected an inscribed stone or Stele in his capital city, Dhiban, recounting his achievement. This stone known as the Mesha Stele is made of black basalt stone and has 32 lines of writing, documenting the biblical king as a historical one and giving interesting details about the history, religion, geography and language of the Moabite people.

Town center of Madaba





Mosaics from Madaba

Madaba flourished particularly during the Roman, Byzantine and early Islamic periods, when many public buildings, churches and monasteries were built. Madaba and the area around it became a bone of contention between the Nabataeans and the Hasmoneans in the Hellenistic period (332-63 BC), and it was surrendered to the Nabataean king Aretas III in exchange for the help he gave to Hyrcanus II. However, Madaba and its territory remained within the Nabataean sphere of political influence from the early 1^{st} century BC until 106 AD, when the region was incorporated into the newly created Roman Province of Arabia by the Emperor Trajan, who also built the "Via Nova Trajana" highway, which ran from Bosra in southern Syria to Ayla on the Gulf of Aqaba passing through Philadelphia (Amman) and Madaba.

Over the centuries, the city's inhabitants established elaborate systems for collecting and storing water, the remains of which can be seen today. Communal cisterns and the Madaba Roman reservoir, the largest in the Syrian region, are an example of just how well

this community was organized. When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Eastern Empire, Madaba became the seat of a bishopric from at least the mid fifth century. Churches and other buildings from Madaba's golden age testify to the city's Christian identity as a major stopping point on the Christian pilgrimage route. Images and inscriptions from many mosaic pavements provide glimpses into the social and ecclesiastical life of the city and its region from the late 5^{th} to the 8^{th} century AD.

Since the 7^{th} and the 8^{th} centuries, Madaba's Muslims and Christians have been living peacefully together with acceptance and understanding while proudly presenting their shared heritage. Christianity and Islam have flourished, side-by-side, right up to the present day. In fact, even after the Muslim Arabs conquered the region and Madaba fell under their control, new churches were built and fine mosaics continued to be produced, especially during the 7^{th} and 8^{th} century under the Umayyad Caliphate. The so-called Burnt Palace, possibly a bishop's residence, continued to be used throughout the tolerant Umayyad period and beyond. In fact, the Madaba Archaeological Park, which houses the Directorate of Tourism of Madaba, is built on the outline of the palace. The surviving mosaics from the east and west wing, in addition to remains of the stone walls, have been covered with a shelter for protection. The latest dated mosaic pavement in Jordan, in the Church of the Virgin -dated to 767 AD- shows that almost 130 years after the arrival of the Muslims, there was still a Christian community in Madaba that was sufficiently prosperous to rebuild their church.

The Madaba area gradually declined in importance and very little is known about the town from the 9^{th} to the 19^{th} century. In the 1880s, Christian Arab tribes emigrated from Karak in the south of Jordan and resettled in Madaba. As they built their houses and churches, they came upon many Byzantine mosaics, including a great treasure: the 6^{th} century mosaic Map of the Holy Land in the original Byzantine Church of St. George. This is the earliest map of the Holy Land to survive from antiquity. It is a real geographical and topographical map, showing the area extending from Tyre (southern Lebanon) in the north to the Nile Delta in the south, and from the Palestinian coast in the west to Rabba (Areopolis) and Karak in the east.



Detail of the map of the Holy Land, St. George's Church, Madaba

The Madaba Institute for Mosaic Art and Restoration

Following the pioneering work of the Franciscan Father Piscirillo on Jordan's ancient mosaics, and at his instigation, the Italian government helped establish the Madaba School of Mosaics. The aim was to teach students about the restoration and conservation of ancient mosaics, as well as the creation of replicas and modern pieces. Souvenir shops all over Jordan stock very interesting mosaics made by students who set up their own workshops to make some very interesting works of art. The latest development at the school is the conversion of its courses into a four-year Bachelor of Arts degree. Stone conservation is also taught.



Mosaics from Madaba



St. George's Church, Madaba

Visits

The principal attractions in Madaba city include the Apostles Church, St. George's Church, the Archaeological Park and the Madaba Institute for Mosaic Art & Restoration, the first of its kind in this region, which trains young Jordanians to create and care for mosaics, so as to continue this beautiful tradition.

The visitor experience could start with a walking tour beginning at the Visitor Center through the main pedestrian areas with shops, restaurants and services along the route. Visitors can experience a real "souk" atmosphere, particularly in the narrower streets. The

Madaba Archaeological Park is now part of the modern urban fabric where many of the local neighbourhoods have been erected on top of ancient ruins. It is home to four of the fifteen Byzantine churches in Madaba built over 1400 years ago: the remains of the Church of the Virgin, the Martyrs' Church, the Sonnaa' Family Church and the Church of the Prophet Elias can be seen lining both sides of the Roman street. The park and the Madaba area also contain an elaborate system for collecting and storing water built due to the lack of natural springs in the city.

The Park neighbourhood holds other important sites, notably St. George's Church, with its famous mosaic map, and the Church of the Apostles. Unfortunately, Philadelphia (Amman) and virtually all the territory north of Wadi Mujib (Arnon), including Madaba, are now missing from this oldest surviving cartographic depiction of the Holy Land from the 6th century AD. However, it remains one of the most famous



Detail of the map of the Holy Land, St. George's Church, Madaba



mosaic pavements among the many masterpieces which rightfully made Madaba the "City of Mosaics". These mosaics tell stories of Madaba and the region, of life and spirituality over thousands of years.

Madaba's historic centre also contains several ancient structures and charming buildings from the late Ottoman era. All of Madaba's main attractions are centrally located within easy walking distance of the Visitors Center and Archaeological Park. Rare among antiquities sites in Jordan, past and present are tightly woven into the fabric of this gently bustling modern town. There are also various interesting sites around the city such as Mount Nebo, Mukawir (Machareous) and Umm Ar-Rasas (one of the many important ancient Islamic sites in the governorate) as well as valuable natural resources such as the Ma'in hot springs, the Dead Sea Panoramic Complex, the mosaic crafts industry, the weaving industry (Bani Hamida) etc...

Madaba by John Lewis Burckhardt. Year 1822

“At the end of eight hours we reached Madeba, built upon a round hill; this is the ancient Medaba, but there is no river near it. It is at least half an hour in circumference; I observed many remains of the walls of private houses, constructed with blocks of silex; but not a single edifice is standing. There is a large *birket*, which, as there is no spring at Madeba might still be of use to the Bedouins, were the surrounding ground cleared of the rubbish, to allow the water to flow into it; but such an undertaking is far beyond the views of the wandering Arab. On the west side of the town are the foundations of a temple, built with large stones, and apparently of great antiquity. A part of its eastern wall remains, constructed in the same style as the castle wall at Amman. At the entrance of one of the courts stand two columns of the Doric order, each of two pieces, without bases, and thicker in the centre than at either extremity, a peculiarity of which this is the only instance I have seen in Syria. More modern capitals have been added, one of which is Corinthian and the other Doric, and an equally coarse architrave has been laid upon them. In the centre of one of the courts is a large well.”

The mountains of Moab

“The mountains of Moab are the wonder and the glory of this land. And surely among all the ranges of the world they must stand out forever in the memory of him who has looked upon them. Their beauty is ineffable, and tradition seems to have given to that beauty a sort of consecration. From a sanctuary of Moab Moses gazed upon the Promised Land, and there he died and was buried. [...] Whereas the other ranges of mountains that guard the valley of the Jordan and the Dead Sea are stern and terrible, cruel in their fierce nakedness, the mountains of Moab seem always to hold themselves apart in a mood of exquisite reserve. Always a kind of lovely veil seems floating before them, through which, though they are often seen distinctly, they present themselves with a species of noble restraint, suggestive of a strange purity and dignity which may rightly be worshiped, but which must never be too nearly approached.”

The Holy Land by Robert Hichens, 1910



View from Mont Nebo

Surroundings

Madaba serves as the gateway to the King's Highway, the Kingdom's premier tourism route, which continues a further 150 kilometres down to Petra. Madaba is an important hub for all kinds of tourism. Religious sites, leisure, trekking and walking through canyon trails, are all possible in this Governorate.

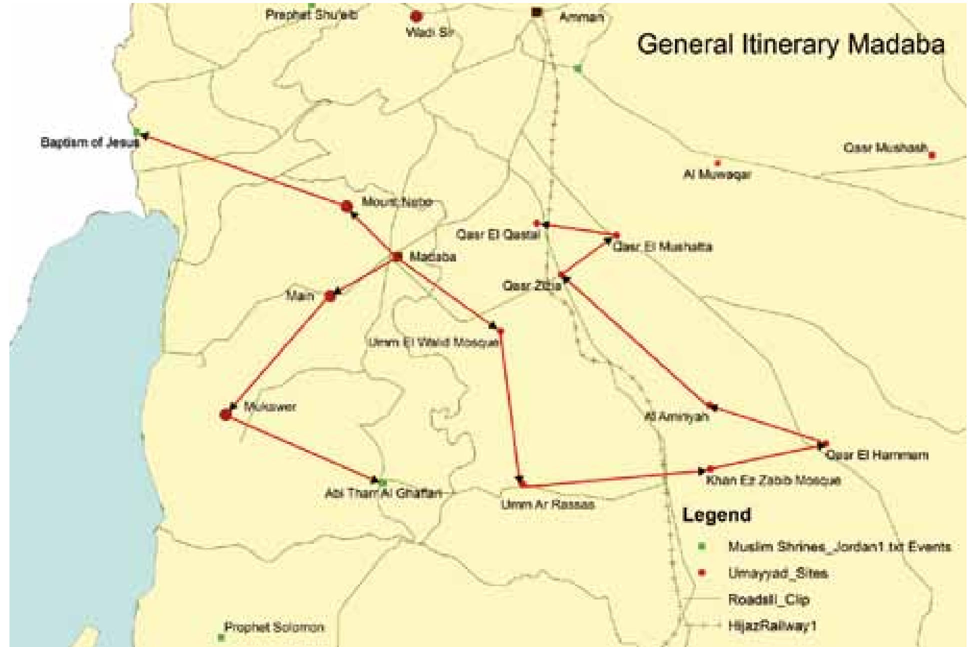
The Umayyad sites in the region are the Umm al-Walid Mosque, Umm Ar-Rasas, Qasr al-Mushatta, Qasr Zizia, Qasr al-Qastal (the earliest still existing Umayyad Mosque) and Qasr al-Hammam. Islamic sites include Abu Tharr al-Ghaffari and Khan Az-Zabib Mosque.

Madaba has another highly attractive trio in the Baptism site, Mt. Nebo for Moses and Mukawir for St. John the Baptist. This cluster contains Jordan's part of the Biblical Holy Land and is rich in remains from the later Byzantine and Umayyad Christian era. In general, these clusters are within 30-minutes drive of Madaba.

- Bethany the site of the Baptism of Jesus Christ 35 Kms
- Mount Nebo the Moses site 10 Kms
- The Dead Sea 34 Kms
- The Dead Sea Panorama 22 Kms
- Umm Ar-Rasas 34 Kms

Bethany, site of the Baptism of Jesus Christ





- Mukawir 33 Kms
- Hot springs at Mai'n 33 Kms

If you visit the region around Madaba, you will discover Mount Nebo and the Bethany Baptism Site to the northwest, Wadi Mujib and Umm Ar-Rasas to the south, Hisban to the north and other important neighbouring Holy Land sites such as the Dead Sea to the West. Extending from Bethany in the North to the villages of Dhiban and Umm Ar-Rasas in the South, this cluster covers a very historic and scenic area known over two thousand years ago as the Plain of Moab (also called the Dead Sea Highlands).

The Madaba region has been the stage for great events that have influenced human history and religion. About 19 million years ago, the Earth shifted giving birth to these dramatic landscapes: the rift valley, the lowest place on earth, the Dead Sea; and high above, the biblical "Plains of Moab". This unique natural formation has remained relatively unchanged since people first settled here more than five thousand years ago.

Mount Nebo

Ten minutes' drive to the northwest of Madaba lies Mount Nebo, the final station in Moses' historic flight from Egypt to the Holy Land. Here, from the same platform where the late Pope John Paul II stood in the year 2000, visitors can enjoy a panoramic view of the Holy Land, spanning the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea, just as Moses glimpsed it more than 3,000 years ago. Because of its association with Moses, Mount Nebo became a place of pilgrimage for early Christians. A monastic foundation and a late 4^{th} century chapel built to commemorate the death of Moses still remain standing alongside a 6^{th} century church.

Umm Ar-Rasas

A half hour drive southeast of Madaba is Umm Ar-Rasas, a UNESCO World Heritage listed site. Umm Ar-Rasas (known in ancient times as Kastron Mefaa), one of the many important Islamic sites in the governorate of Madaba, was mentioned in the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. The rectangular walled city was abandoned after a powerful earthquake hit the region in 749. Although mostly in ruins, several restored buildings can still be seen, including four churches and some beautiful stone arches. The very large and perfectly preserved mosaic floors of Saint Stephen's Church complex can also be enjoyed. These date from the 8^{th} century and have only recently been carefully excavated from beneath the dust of centuries. A few kilometres away, you can wonder at a 15-meter high stylite tower without a door or inner staircase. It was probably used by early Christian monks as a place of solitary meditation.

Machaerus - Mukawir

Mukawir, ancient Machaerus, is about 30 minutes drive southwest of Madaba on the Kings' Highway. Here, at his fortified hilltop palace, Herod Antipas imprisoned and beheaded John the Baptist, "after Salome's fateful dance." Mukawir was one of the designated pilgrimage sites for the year 2000. A breathtaking view of the Dead Sea can be enjoyed from the top of this mound, especially at sunset.



View of Mukawir and Dead Sea

Wadi Mujib & Hammamat Ma'in

Sports-minded visitors have a number of options for active touring and sports across the Moab highlands, Dead Sea and Wadi Mujib areas. The Mujib Nature Reserve in the south offers both easy and difficult trails for nature and adventure enthusiasts. Since ancient times, the nearby Hammamat Ma'in hot mineral springs have attracted visitors seeking the benefits of this natural spa.

Umm ar-Rasas by J.S. Buckingham. Year 1816

"We ascended the hill to the southward of this stream, and passing for half an hour over a chalky and barren soil, we obtained a distant view of Oom-el-Russas, about eight or ten miles off, to the southward of us. The only conspicuous object which presented itself to our view at this distance was a high tower, looking like a monumental column standing alone. We continued our way towards it in nearly a straight line, over a gently rising ground, with an improving soil, and reached it about noon. On entering the site of this ruined town, we came first to some smoothly hewn cisterns in the rock, with marks of a large quarry from which abundance of stone had been taken away for building. Beyond these, and on a higher level, we found a portion of a square building, resembling the remains of a small fort, the walls of which were pierced with long and narrow loop-holes for arrows or musketry. A few paces south of this stood the tower which had shown itself so conspicuously at a distance. This tower was not more than ten feet square at its base, and from thirty to forty feet high."

Umm al-Walid by J.S. Buckingham. Year 1816

"Ascending from hence to a higher level by a gradual rise, we came in half an hour to another ruined town, called Oom-el-Weleed. It stands on the top of one of those ridges of land so common in these parts, not deserving the name of hills, though breaking the general smoothness of the surface; rising like a very high swell of the sea arrested in its progress, and running for miles in the same direction: the course of the present being east and west, with a small vale on each side to the north and south. The Remains of buildings here at Oom-el-Weleed appeared to me to be more extensive than even those at Jelool. The blocks of stone, of which the buildings were constructed, were also much larger. Roman arches were still remaining perfect at many of the entrances to private dwellings; but throughout the whole, neither columns nor fragments of sculptured work any where met my view."

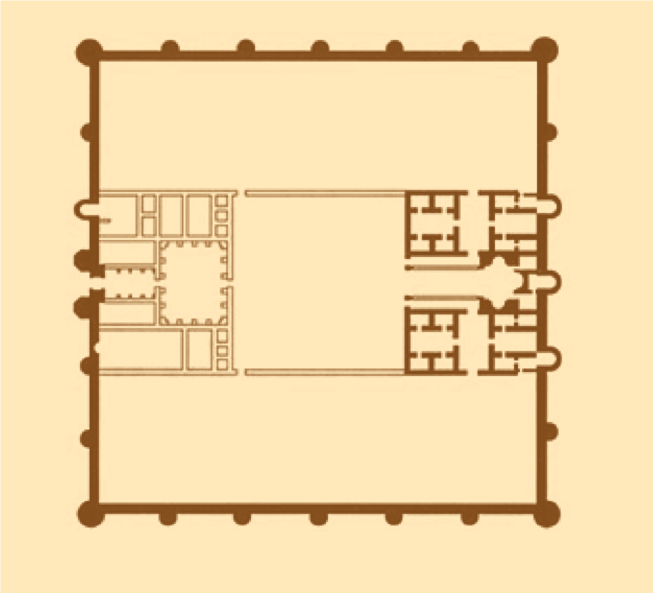
Mushatta Palace

Archaeologists strongly believe that it was the Umayyad caliph al-Walid II (743-744 AD) who commissioned the construction of this palace, after comparing its architectural and aesthetic features and the materials used to build it with those of other sites/monuments in the region. It is the largest Umayyad palace in Jordan and lies 25 kilometres south of Amman and 20 kilometres east of Madaba. A combination of limestone and brick was used in the construction of al-Mushatta, which was used to commemorate the caliph's authority. It consists mainly of the entrance hall, a mosque (with a *mihrab* still visible), an audience hall and some residential quarters. The living quarters comprise residential suites organized around central courtyards.

The sides of the palace are 144 meters long and it is surrounded by an outer wall measuring 3-5.5 meters high with 25 towers, amongst which there are four round corner-towers and two octagonal ones flanking the main gate. The foundations and the lowest layers

Mushatta Palace





Creswell, K.A.C. and Alla, J.W. (1989), *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture, revised and supplemented by James W. Allan.* Adopted from O. Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art.*

of the exterior structures are made of stone, while the upper courses and the roofing of the interior are made of brick.

Archaeologists suggest that the building was never completed. Some of the palace sections are still at foundation level, particularly at the southern end. This may have been due to the political turbulence of that period, when the Abbasids overthrew the Umayyads and moved the capital to Baghdad.

The palace is divided into three sections, although only the middle part was actually built, with its northern half fully completed. The other two sections, the eastern and the western, were abandoned before completion. The middle section contains the most important parts of the palace, such as the throne room and its associated structures. A triumphal arch standing on four pillars, with a central arch span of over 6.5 m acted as the entrance to this section. Three rosettes decorated the upper part of the side arches. A 27 metre-long vaulted tripartite hall linked the arches to the throne room, which has a brick dome and is surrounded by four compounds for the royal household and for domestic use. Each compound comprises two barrel-vaulted suites lit by two oculus windows, and shares a courtyard with another compound. This layout is based on a classical model that goes back to the 3rd century AD, and reflects a common floorplan followed in civilian Umayyad buildings that survive in Syria today. The rooms are reminiscent of Sassanid Iran, perhaps designed for us by the caliphs' wives. The eastern part contained the mosque with the mihrab on the southern wall. The western part contained the living quarters with numerous rooms for guards, dignitaries and courtiers organized around courtyards.

Al-Mushatta is considered a showcase of early Islamic stone and carved plaster work with floral, animal and geometric motifs. The façade of the southern exterior has a 1.20 m high richly decorated frieze with mouldings of pairs of interlacing vine-stalks, forming a loop that includes a vine leaf and a bunch of grapes. Above this frieze there is a 2.85 m high panel decorated with a

Mushatta Palace



zigzag pattern, forming large triangles with rosettes in the centre and a combination of lotuses and pine cones. The rosettes are surrounded by carvings of vines, humans and animals (e.g. lion, parrot, buffalo, griffin, oxen, as well as mythical creatures like a dog-bird and a lion with a human head). The Palace has Byzantine and Sassanian influences in the brickwork as well as in the layout and design. Many of its decorative features contain Persian and Sassanian mythical animals and Coptic iconography suggesting that craftsmen were brought here from Persia and Egypt. Christian builders may have been involved in the construction of the palace as cross-shaped marks have also been found. The frieze on the outer wall was given to Kaiser Wilhelm by the Ottoman sultan Abd al-Hamid just before First World War and is now in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin.



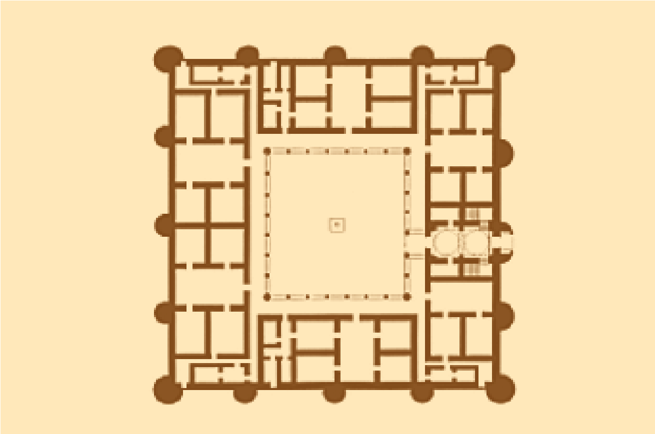
Mushatta Palace



Qasr al-Qastal

Qasr al-Qastal

Located 20 kilometres east of Madaba and around 7 kilometres west of Qasr Mushatta, Qasr al-Qastal is a complex that encompasses a palace, a mosque, a water system, domestic quarters and a bath. Next to the palace lies a very early Islamic cemetery. A number of its inscribed tombstones date back to the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, and are currently on display at the Madaba Archaeological Museum. The palace is 70 x 70 m in size with a circular tower flanking each corner. Three semi-circular interval towers are located along all the walls, except for the eastern side which has the entrance and just two towers. The palace was built of ashlar-cut limestone, with fresco plaster covered walls on the inside. Mosaics also covered the walls and the floors of the palace. The palace courtyard (40 x 40 m) is in the centre of the complex. It is surrounded by a portico and has six residential units organized around it. Each unit comprises four rooms laid out around a rectangular courtyard. Another six units were built on the second floor which was reached by twin staircases. The palace had a water collection system with pipes channelling water from the roof down to cisterns. Lined with three layers of plaster, the palace's cisterns were originally naturally occurring caves in the layer of limestone on which the *qasr* was built. There are



Plan of al-Qastal Palace, after P. Cartier, 1984

now some 70 cisterns around the palace. A large one under the palace's central courtyard has at least two entrances, one of which was decorated. The palace also has three large reservoirs (10,000 m^2 in total). A system of channels links these cisterns to a spring on top of the hill. About 1 km east of the palace there is a 400 metre long, 4 metre thick Umayyad dam with a capacity of 2 million cubic meters. Traces of an ancient road from the Roman/Byzantine period have also been identified about 1 km south-west of Qastal. There is also a mosque in the complex with a minaret believed to be the oldest purpose-built minaret in the world. The mosque's *mihrab* was originally rectangular before being later converted to the typical semi-circular shape.



Qasr al-Qastal



Qasr al-Qastal

It was once flanked by marble columns and carved capitals and is reached by a spiral staircase.

Like Qasr al-Hallabat, al-Qastal has a bath complex nearby, which was richly decorated with frescoes, mosaics, marble-tiled floors and carvings that depicted geometric, floral and animal motifs similar to those at al-Hallabat. The layout of the bath complex is similar to that of Qusayr Amra.

Scholars are still debating about the date of the palace. Historical sources and certain stylistic features suggest 744 AD as the date of its completion. When al-Walid II visited the area in 743-744 AD, the palace already existed. The layout of the palace (living quarters organized around courtyards) is very similar to that of other Umayyad palaces of this period, such as Qasr Kharraneh (or Harraneh). Another clue linking the palace to the reign of Yazid II ibn Abd al-Malik (720-740 AD) comes in a contemporary poem dedicated to Yazid by Kuthayyir ibn Abd al-Rahman 'Azza (644-723 AD), which mentions a palace. The design of the palace is very similar to others constructed under Yazid's patronage, such as Qasr al-Muwaqqar and the Umayyad Palace on the Amman Citadel. It is worth noting, however, that construction may have begun before the reign of Yazid II. The palace was converted into domestic quarters during the Ayyubid/Mamluk period (12^{th}-16^{th} century AD).

Umm al-Walid

The ruins of Umm al-Walid lie 15 km southeast of Madaba and cover the length of a small hill. The site has been occupied since the Bronze Age, although archaeological explorations have focused on the Umayyad period, specifically on the eastern Qasr and the mosque. The complex consists of a mosque, an Eastern Qasr, a Central Qasr, a Western Qasr and two Roman temples. The complex of three palaces at Umm al-Walid shows an urban pattern of settlement which consists of a unifying enclosure and a common courtyard. The most excavated feature is the Eastern Umayyad Qasr. The mosque and the Qasr were built during the same period as they share the same building materials and architectural motifs.

View from Mont Nebo



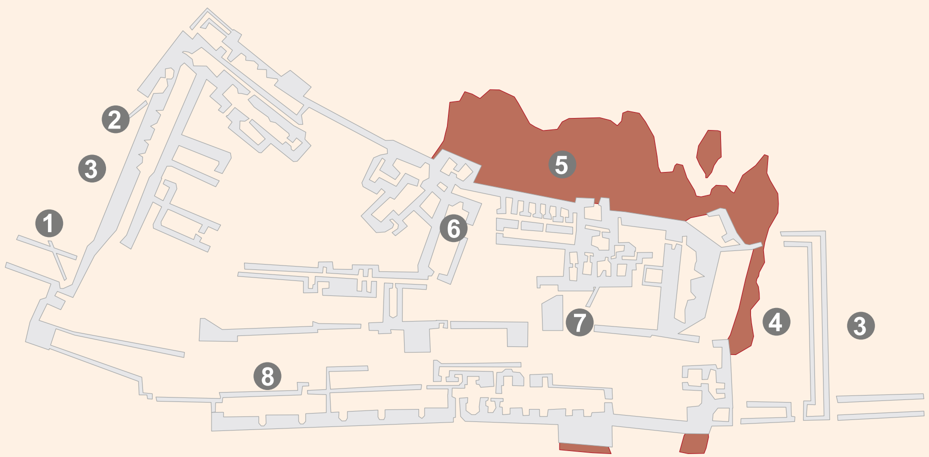
Qasr al-Qastal

The Umayyad mosque dates from the period 712-737 AD. It is located about 60 meters to the east of the Qasr. In fact, there were two mosques, with the second being an enlargement of the first. The mosque is rectangular in shape (11.67 x 12.67 meters), with a *mihrab*, two entrances from the north and east sides, and the remains of a minaret near the end of the east wall. The interior of the mosque is divided into three nearly equal parts by two arcades with three arches each.

Khirbet Khan Ez-Zabib (Khan az-Zabib)

Khan az-Zabib was one of the stations on the Hijaz railway, located 25 km to the southeast of Umm al-Walid, and 37 km to the south of the capital Madaba (54 km south of Amman). The caravanserai is 18 km southeast of Khirbet ez-Zona and 5 km east of the Desert Highway, and is generally considered to be fully Islamic. It was built out of materials and structures from the remains of a small late Roman town. Although now damaged, the remains of a large rectangular structure can still be seen just beyond the northeast corner of the Islamic caravanserai. This structure dates to 712-37 AD. Khan az-Zabib Mosque is rectangular in shape (11.20 x 10.38m) and has two entrances from the north and east sides, with a recess in the southern wall.

Karak



Castle of Karak

1. Present entrance
2. Original entrance
3. Moats
4. Cistern
5. Glacis
6. Chapel
7. Mameluke residence
8. Museum

Karak by Ibn Battuta, September 1326

"Karak, which is also called 'The Castle of the Raven', is one of the most famous, marvellous, and impregnable fortresses. It is surrounded on all sides by the river-bed, and has but one gate, the entrance to which is hewn in the living rock, as is the approach to its vestibule. This fortress was used by kings as a place of refuge in times of calamity, as the sultan an-Nasir did when his mamluk, Salar seized power. The caravan stopped for four days at a place called ath-Thaníya, outside Karak, where preparations were made for entering the desert."



Karak castle

Karak lies to the south of Amman, on the King's Highway. Perched 900 metres above sea level it has a magnificent view of the Dead Sea and is home to around 170,000 people. Karak has been inhabited since at least the Iron Age and was an important city for the Moabites (called Qir of Moab) in the first millennium BC. While the castle we see today essentially dates back to the 12th century, Karak has been a fortress since biblical times.

In ancient times, the region immediately to the east of the Dead Sea was known as Moab, of which Karak was an important city. The earliest references to the people of Moab appear in two inscriptions from Luxor (Upper Egypt, ca. 1279-1212 BC). The Old Testament also refers to the people who lived east of the Dead Sea as Moabites.





View from the castle of Karak

Karak became an important town during the late Hellenistic Period, when it was known as Kharkha. Under the Byzantine Empire it was the seat of a bishop, whose diocese contained the much venerated Church of Nazareth, and it remained predominantly Christian even under Arab and Islamic rule.

In the 12th Century, Karak was taken by the Crusader Reynald of Chatillon, although Reynald's peacetime robbery of a large caravan in 1177 triggered swift retribution from Saladin -who attacked the Crusader kingdom– and ultimately defeated their army at the Battle of Hittin. Under the Ayyubids and early Mamluk sultans, the castle was substantially renovated and the town's fortifications were strengthened with massive towers, such that the only way into the town was through subterranean passages. Karak flourished under Mamluk rule when it became a centre of learning and industry.

From its position east of the Jordan River, Karak was able to control both Bedouin herders and the trade routes from Damascus to Egypt and Mecca.

Gastronomy

Jamid

Jamid is made of yogurt which has been shaken until all the whey is separated and the fatless liquid is salted and dried into solid chunks. The best *Jamid* in all of Jordan is made in Karak. The dried yogurt is used to make *Mansaf*, the national Jordanian dish, and *Fatireh*, another form of *Tharid*, which is unique to the Karak region.

Tharid, Mansaf and Fatireh

Many modern dishes date back to early Islam when the most famous dish was *Tharid*, a favourite of the Prophet. In its simplest form, *Tharid* is bread crumbs soaked with meat broth, and is eaten with the hand. Many different recipes have been suggested over the years including some from the Umayyad era. The most popular dish in Jordan today, *Mansaf,* is lamb cooked in *Jamid* broth laid on a rice pilaf with almonds and pine nut garnish and can rightly be considered a descendant of *Tharid*. *Fatireh* is *Taboon* bread which has not been allowed to rise and is cooked in *Jamid* broth with tomatoes and sometimes onions. Sometimes chicken is also cooked in *Jamid*. Generous amounts of boiling *Samneh* are added to the dish before eating.



Karak castle



Karak castle

Visits

Castle of Karak

This castle was built by Pagan, butler to king Fulk, in the 12th century (1140s), who called the city 'Crac des Moabites'. Construction was finished in 1161. In Mamluk times it was expanded by king Baybars, who defeated the Mongols under Holagu Khan at the battle of Ain Jalout, thereby halting their advance against Egypt and Syria. In 1840 Ibrahim Pasha, son of Ali Pasha the Great, who waged and won many battles against the Ottomans, destroyed its fortifications in his campaign to put down a revolt by the people of Karak.

The Swiss traveller and geographer, John Lewis Burckhardt, gives an accurate description of the fortress in his 1822 travel book *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*. On his arrival in the town on 15 July 1812 he wrote: "[…] At the west end of the town stands a castle, on the edge of a deep precipice over the Wady Kobeysha. It is built in the style of most of the Syrian castles, with thick walls and parapets, large arched apartments, dark passages with loop-holes, and subterraneous vaults; and it probably owes its origin, like most of these castles, to the prudent system of defence adopted by the Saracens against the Franks during the Crusades. In a large Gothic hall are the remains of paintings in fresco, but so much defaced that nothing can be clearly distinguished. Kerek having been for some time in the hands of the Franks, this hall may have been built at that time for a church, and decorated with paintings. Upon an uncouth figure of a man bearing a large chain I read the letters IONI, painted in large characters; the rest of the inscription was effaced. On the side towards the town the castle is defended by a deep fosse cut in the rock; near which are seen several remains of columns of gray and red granite. On the south side the castle hill is faced with stone in the same manner

Karak Archaeological Museum



as at Aleppo, El Hossn, Szalkhat, etc. On the west side a wall has been thrown across the *wadi*, to some high rocks, which project from the opposite side; a kind of Birket has thus been formed, which formerly supplied the garrison with water. In the castle is a deep well, and many of the private houses also have wells, but their water is brackish; others have cisterns, which save the inhabitants the trouble of fetching their water from the *wadi* below. There are no antiquities in the town, excepting a few fragments of granite columns. A good mosque, built by Melek el Dhaher, is now in ruins. The Christians have a church, dedicated to St. George, or El Khuder, which has been lately repaired. On the declivity of the *wadi* to the south of the town are some ancient sepulchral caves, of coarse workmanship, cut in the chalky rock."

The Karak Archaeological Museum was opened in 1980 inside the old castle, which has remains from the Nabataean, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic and Crusader periods. The collections date from the Neolithic to the late Islamic periods and come from the al-Karak and Tafila regions.

Karak castle



The town is built on a triangular plateau with the castle at its narrow southern tip. The city continues to boast a number of restored nineteenth and twentieth century Ottoman buildings, however, the Castle is still the dominant feature towering over its surroundings. In 1884 a group of Greek Orthodox Christian migrants from Karak went to Madaba where they came upon one of the world's greatest discoveries, the earliest ever map of Palestine.

Saladin's siege of the fortress of Karak in 1184

"We witnessed the departure of Saladin with all his army of Muslims on his way to besiege the fortress of al-Karak, which is one of the greatest fortresses held by the Christians and is an obstacle on the road to Hejaz and blocks the access of Muslims to the continent. Between Karak and Jerusalem there is a day's journey or slightly more. It is the crucial point in the land of Palestine and has a commanding view of the whole area. [...] During Salah ad-Din's (Saladin) siege of the fortress of al-Karak, the Franks charged against him en masse. They had grouped men together from all over and were determined to wrest control of his water sources and cut off his supply lines from the Muslim lands. The sultan then decided to break camp around the fortress and turned all his troops on them reaching the water source before them. They then changed direction [with him in pursuit], taking a rough path, on which most of their animals perished, and headed for the said fortress of al-Karak; meanwhile the paths leading back to their lands had been blocked and they were left with only one way back to the fortress through the desert, which was a roundabout route that took them even further away."

Ibn Djubayr, *Rihla*, 12th century

Surroundings

The most important Islamic shrine in Jordan is in the Governorate of al-Karak in Mazar village, south of Karak, where the three Commanders who were martyred in the Battle of Mu'tah against the Byzantines are buried. The shrines of Zeid ibn Hassan Zein al-Abideen ibn Ali, Farwa ibn Amro al-Juthami and the prophets Noah and Solomon are also nearby. Karak is also close to two Umayyad sites, the little known Qasr Mushysh (48 km. south east of Karak) and Qasr al-Basha (44 km. south of Karak).

Further south the Dana Natural Reserve is also worth visiting. Beautiful trails and lush vegetation make the stay at the RSCN (Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature) lodge very appealing. A visit to the ancient copper mines of Finan, where early Christians were used by the Romans as slaves is also worthwhile.



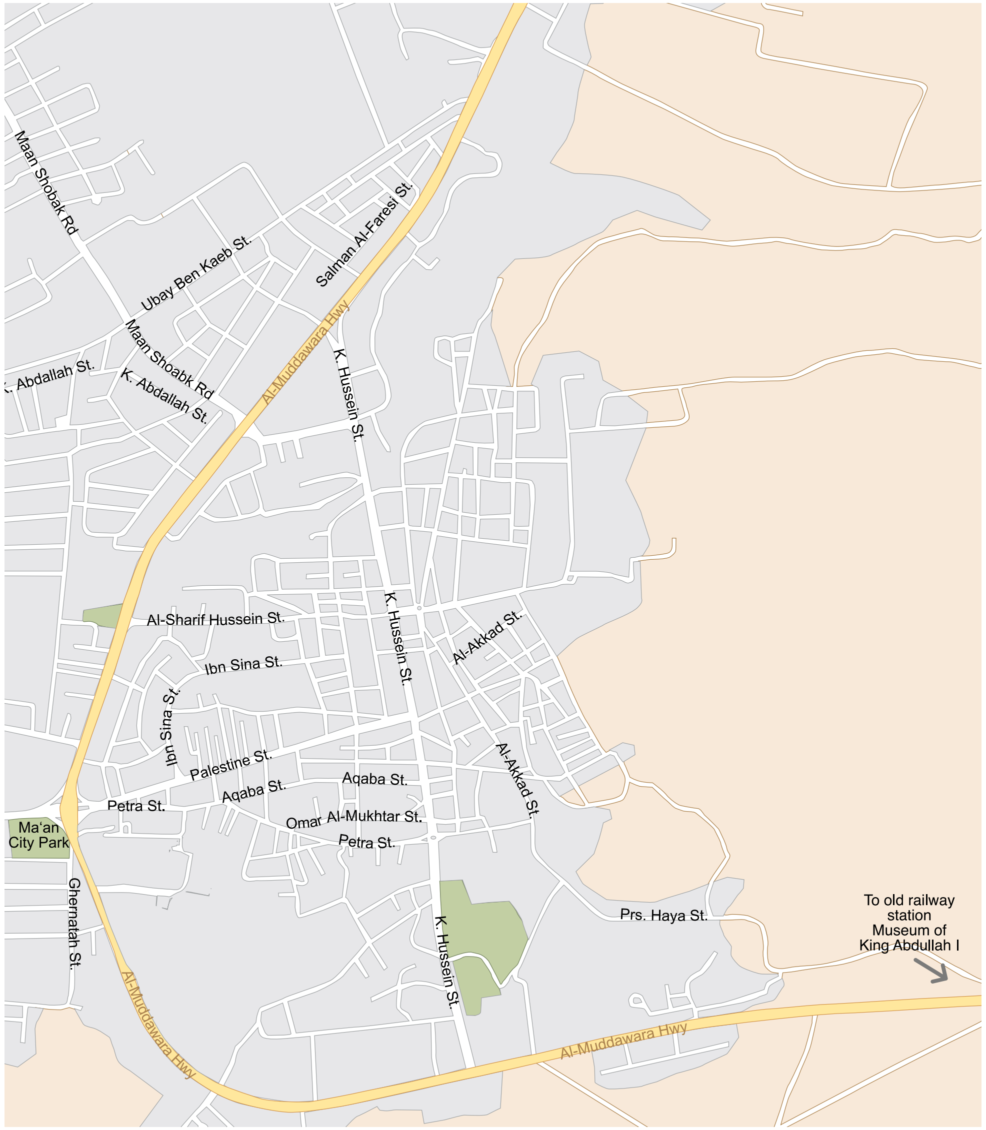
Dana Natural Reserve



Dana Natural Reserve



Ma‘an





Petra by David Roberts (The Holy Land)

Inhabited since prehistoric times, the small town of Ma‘an has always been an important communications hub in the region on the main route connecting the south-western Arabian Peninsula, Damascus and the ports of the eastern Mediterranean. This is why since ancient times it has played an important role in trade and caravan routes, and later in the Islamic era due to its position on the pilgrimage route that linked Syria and Mecca.

On the first of September 1900, sultan Abd al-Hamid II began construction of the Hejaz railway line between Damascus and Medina. The Amman / Ma‘an railway in Jordan was opened on September 1904. Ma‘an railway station is a secondary terminal building in relation to the main terminal in Damascus.



Archaeological site, Aqaba



Train Station, Ma'an. Around 1920

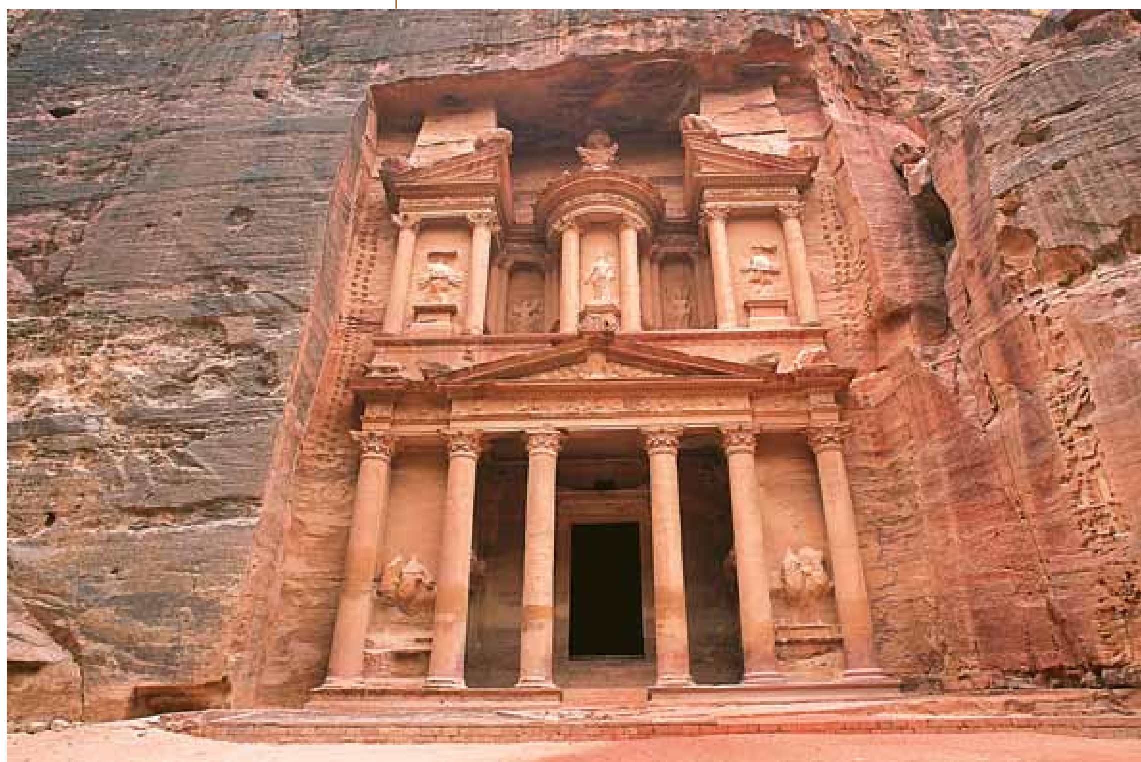
Ma'an is a great place from which to visit some of the most interesting sites in Jordan. Petra and its ancient suburban caravanserai are of course a must-see. In addition to Nabataean, Roman and Byzantine ancient monuments and archaeological remains in Petra, one can also visit the Neolithic village in suburban Beidha which includes the Nabatean caravanserai known as Mini or Little Petra, which has a small *siq* and a number of carved rock facades, dams, and cisterns.

Visits

Ma'an station on the famous Hejaz railway line has witnessed several important events in the recent history of modern Jordan. The significance of sites such as Ma'an station does not lie in a specific technological feature or an architectural monument with grand aesthetic value, but of different layers of memory, related for example to the Arab renaissance where a

series of battles against the Ottomans were fought along the Hejaz railway line, including the Battle of Ma'an. A military decoration known as the Ma'an Medal was struck to commemorate the martyrdom and bravery of the fighters who came from different parts of the Arab world to join the Arab uprising of 1916 against the Ottoman Turks. The role of Lawrence of Arabia as an advisor and fellow soldier is also well known. Prince Abdullah, the founder of modern Jordan, was the great grandfather of the Hashemite king Abdullah II of Jordan and grandfather to the late king Hussein.

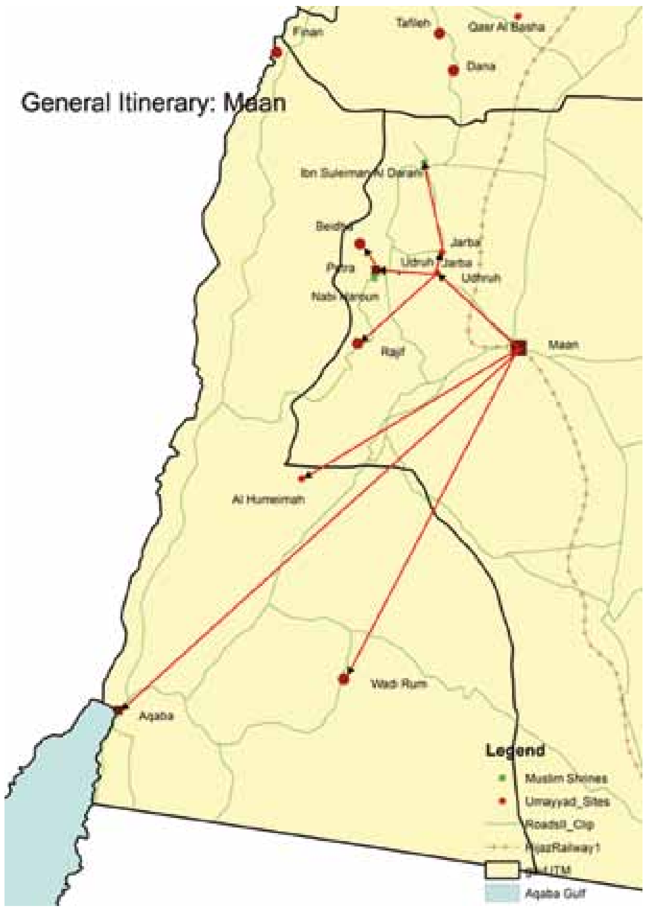
An interesting place to see in Ma'an is the old railway station, which is being turned into a museum. The station and the Hijaz railway line were built by the Germans and the compound includes the house of the German engineer who built the station, as well as a steam generation room and a small building that was used as the National Defence Centre and was later converted into a small palace for king Abdullah I bin Al Hussein of Jordan.



Al-Khasneh (the treasure), Petra

Surroundings

Around 50 kilometres west of Ma'an, Rajif offers breathtaking scenic views of whitish Ordovician sandstones. The Islamic shrine of prophet Haroun (Aron) has both a mosque and the remains of a Byzantine church, while the shrine of Ibn Suleiman al-Darani is also of interest. Umayyad sites include Udruh, Jarba, Aqaba castle and al-Humaymah, the last of which appears to have been occupied by various different cultures. It has an extensive water collection system and is most famous as being the birthplace of the Abbasid movement that toppled the Umayyads. To the east is the important settlement of Bayir.





Aqaba castle



Al-Khasneh (the treasure), Petra

Petra

No visit to Jordan is complete without seeing the ancient city of Petra, one of the "New Seven Wonders of the World". Its main entrance is through a deep gorge about 1.2 kilometres long which offers a delightful walk amongst fantastic rock formations, niches and water channels. Evidence of Epi-Palaeolithic and Neolithic life has been discovered in the region, but the first known ancient inhabitants of Petra were the Edomites. After their decline, probably after wars with the Jews, their cousins the Nabataeans moved in and brought the city to luxurious prosperity by taking over the trade in frankincense and myrrh with southern Arabia. During the first century AD Petra became the capital of a kingdom that stretched from Damascus in the North to Madain Saleh in Northern

Arabia. Petra is a miracle of geological and manmade formations. Later occupations included the Romans, the Byzantines, Muslims and even the Crusaders. The Nabataeans were as good engineers and artisans as they were architects as shown by their complex water management systems and their finely painted ceramics.



Petra



Udruh

Udruh lies 20 kilometres north-west of Ma'an and 15 km east of Petra. Udruh is a Roman fortress with an Ottoman castle built on to its northern wall to protect the *Hajj* trail (Darb al-Hajj). The Roman fortress at Udruh continued to be used throughout the Byzantine and Islamic periods and the site has some Umayyad remains, such as an extensive water management system and agricultural *qanats* (water irrigation channels), which still exist today.

Not far from Udruh is Jarba, the site of the Arbitration Mount, where the conflict between the Umayyad Muawiyah, the contender to the caliphate, and the caliph Ali ibn Abi Taleb was settled. The Umayyad Amr ibn al-As and Ali's son met to resolve the issue of the disputed succession to the caliphate throne. In a strange, dramatic turn of events al-Hussein, Ali's son, conceded to Muawiyah.

Qasr Bayir

Qasr Bayir ruins are located 109 km northeast of Ma'an. This palace was built in the Umayyad era by al-Walid II (743-44 AD) before he become caliph, among many other palaces built in the Jordania/Badia desert. Before its final destruction in 1931, its building stone was used by Beake Pasha to build an outpost for the Arab legion.

The palace was a tower-fort type structure, with a rectangular floor plan almost 70 m long. Its walls have round towers and a few rooms with 4 or 5 courses of sandstone blocks in the foundations. The tower in the northern corner still survives and has a small courtyard with 3 rooms (*bayts*) similar to Qasr Mushatta. The site also contains the graves of members of the Huwaitat tribe and a well that is still in use, together with 30 other wells that have now been abandoned.

A cemetery was located to the north east of the building, where a well (called the Snake Well) also stood. The cemetery included a large tomb, that of Sheikh Asad, one of the Sukhur tribe ancestors. When the members of this tribe camped around Qasr Bayer, they sacrificed a camel and covered the tomb with green boughs. Offerings like this were often carried off in Ghazzu (raids by other tribes). Bedouin tribes usually have their cemeteries close to their camping grounds and local clans still include nomadic Bedouins, who move continuously from north to south of the sub-district and vice-versa and occasionally camp in Bayir (70 km to the northeast of al-Jafr).



Aqaba castle

Ma'an by Ibn Battuta. Year 1326

"Thence we journeyed to Ma'an, which is the last town in Syria, and from Aqabat as-Sawan entered the desert, of which the saying goes: 'He who enters it is lost, and he who leaves it is born'."

Ma'an by John Lewis Burckhardt. Year 1822

"At present all this country is a desert, and Maan (Arabic) is the only inhabited place in it. All the castles on the Syrian Hadj route from Fedhein to Medina are deserted. At Maan are several springs, to which the town owes its origin, and these, together with the circumstance of its being a station of the Syrian Hadj, are the cause of its still existing. The inhabitants have scarcely any other means of subsistence than the profits which they gain from the pilgrims in their way to and from Mekka, by buying up all kinds of provisions at Hebron and Ghaza, and selling them with great profit to the weary pilgrims; to whom the gardens and vineyards of Maan are no less agreeable, than the wild herbs collected by the people of Maan are to their camels. The pomegranate, apricots, and peaches of Maan are of the finest quality.

[...] Maan is situated in the midst of a rocky country, not capable of cultivation; the inhabitants therefore depend upon their neighbours of Djebal and Shera for their provision of wheat and barley. At present, owing to the discontinuance of the Syrian Hadj, they are scarcely able to obtain money to purchase it. Many of them have commenced pedlars among the Bedouins, and fabricators of different articles for their use, especially sheep-skin furs, while others have emigrated to Tafyle and Kerek. [...] The inhabitants considering their town as an advanced post to the sacred city of Medina, apply themselves with great eagerness to the study of the Koran. The greater part of them read and write, and many serve in the capacity of Imams or secretaries to the great Bedouin Sheikhs. The two hills upon which the town is built, divide the inhabitants into two parties, almost incessantly engaged in quarrels which are often sanguinary; no individual of one party even marries into a family belonging to the other."

Bibliography

Almagro, M., Caballero, L., Zozaya, J., & Almagro, A. (2002). *Qusayr 'Amra: Residencia y baños en el desierto de Jordania*, Granada, Fundación El legado andalusí.

Bisheh, G. (1985). "Qasr al-Hallabat: an Umayyad desert retreat or farmland?", in A. Hadidi, *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan*, II, Amman, pp. 263-5.

Bisheh, G. (1993). "From Castellum to Palatium: Umayyad Mosaic Pavements from Qasr al-Hallabat in Jordan", in *Muqarnas X: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, pp. 49-56.

Bisheh, G., & Vibert-Guigue, C. (2007). *Les peintures de Qusayr 'Amra: Un bain omeyyade dans la bâdiya jordanienne*, Beyrouth.

De Palma, G., Palumbo, G., Birrozzi, C., Mao, M.-J., Gaetani, M. C., Shhaltoug, A., et al. (2013). "Qusayr Amra World Heritage Site: preliminary report on documentation, conservation and site management activities in 2010-2012", *ADAJ*.

Al-Hasanat, M. (2009). *The Spatial Analysis of an Historical Phenomenon: using GIS to Demonstrate the Strategic Placement of the Umayyad "Desert Palaces"*, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Unpublished. MA thesis.

Hillenbrand, R. (1982). "La *Dolce Vita* in Early Islamic Syria: the Evidence of Later Umayyad Palaces", in *Art History*, 5-1, pp. 1-35.

Talgam, R. (2004). *The Stylistic Origins of Umayyad Sculpture and Architectural Decoration*, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz KG.

Archnet.org. (2016). *Qasr al-Hallabat | Archnet*. [online] Available at: http://archnet.org/sites/2851 [Accessed 19 May 2016].

Archnet.org. (2016). *Qasr al-Mshatta | Archnet*. [online] Available at: http://archnet.org/sites/4135 [Accessed 19 May 2016].

Archnet.org. (2016). *Qasr al-Tuba | Archnet*. [online] Available at: http://archnet.org/sites/4139 [Accessed 19 May 2016].

Centre, U. (2016). *Qasr Al-Mushatta - UNESCO World Heritage Centre*. [online] Whc.unesco.org. Available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1555/ [Accessed 20 May 2016].

Centre, U. (2016). *Al Qastal (Settlement) - UNESCO World Heritage Centre*. [online] Whc.unesco.org. Available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1550/ [Accessed 19 May 2016].

Discoverislamicart.org. (2016). *Discover Islamic Art – Virtual Museum-monument_ISL_jo_Mon01_1_en*. [online] Available at: http://www.discoverislamicart.org/database_item.php?id=monument;ISL;jo;Mon01;1;en [Accessed 20 May 2016].

International.visitjordan.com. (2016). *Welcome to Jordan Tourism Board > Home*. [online] Available at: http://international.visitjordan.com/ [Accessed 20 May 2016].

Muslimheritage.com. (2016). *Mshatta Palace, Jordan; 743-744 CE | Muslim Heritage*. [online] Available at: http://muslimheritage.com/topics/default.cfm?ArticleID=503#_edn3 [Accessed 20 May 2016].

Qantara-med.org. (2016). *Qantara - Mshatta Palace*. [online] Available at: http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_document.php?do_id=98&lang=en [Accessed 20 May 2016].

Qantara-med.org. (2016). *Qantara - Umayyad Palace of Amman*. [online] Available at: http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_document.php?do_id=99&lang=en [Accessed 20 May 2016].

Rough Guides. (2016). *Qasr Kharana | The eastern desert Guide*. [online] Available at: http://www.roughguides.com/destinations/middle-east/jordan/eastern-desert/desert-castles-loop/qasr-kharana/ [Accessed 20 May 2016].

Rough Guides. (2016). *The Umayyad Palace | Amman Guide*. [online] Available at: http://www.roughguides.com/destinations/middle-east/jordan/amman/jabal-al-qala-citadel-hill/umayyad-palace/ [Accessed 20 May 2016].